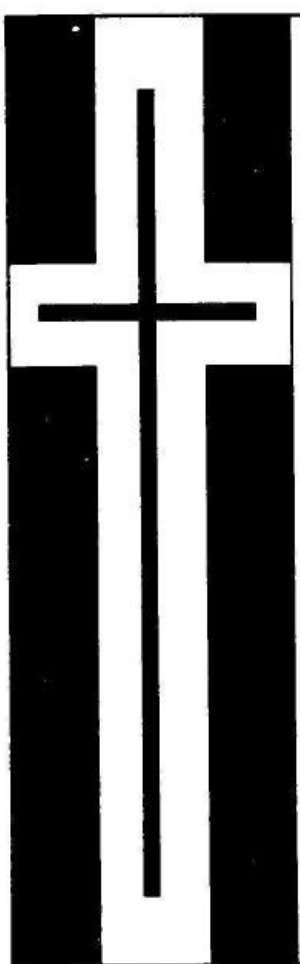

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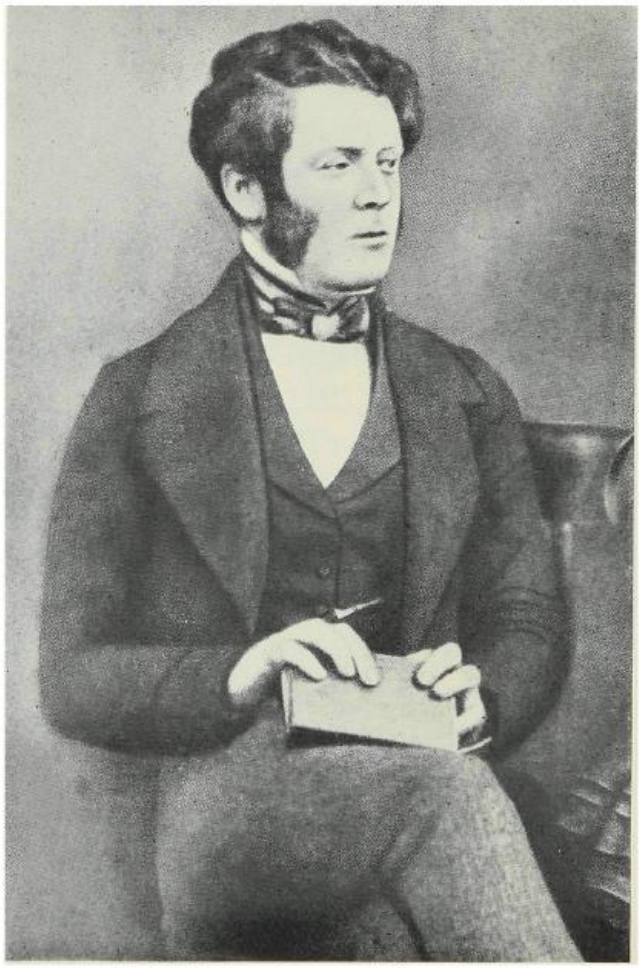
M.A., F.R.G.S.A..

MEMORIES OF PIONEER DAYS IN QUEENSLAND



David Alter Conwell.

MEMORIES OF PIONEER DAYS IN QUEENSLAND

BY

MARY MACLEOD BANKS

WITH A FOREWORD BY

THE RIGHT HON. LORD LAMINGTON

G.C.M.G. G.C.I E., SOMETIME GOVERNOR OF QUEENSLAND

ILLUSTRATED

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*Sketches by Fred C. Wilkinson from photographs.

FOREWORD

I AM glad to have the pleasure of recalling reminiscences of happy days in Queensland. I remember my first experience of a journey into the Bush when I paid a visit to a ' Squatter's ' home. I was met at the station on the Esk Valley railway (a branch to the north from the Brisbane main line to Toowomba and the south) by Mr. McConnel, the son of the first owner, who drove me in his buggy with four horses. We tore along over the road, a mere track for travelling stock, and as cattle tread on the tracks of their predecessors, the surface of soft ground becomes a series of ridges except where corduroyed, that is where planks have been laid down to make the deep mud traversable. Life was delightful in the simple comfort of the homestead. Stations below the Range were far smaller than the large ' runs ' to the west: but the country was still Bush on the Brisbane River at this time. Its wild nature is shown by what was told me at Cressbrook. For several years cattle had been lost from time to time; at length it was discovered that there was a deep recess in the wooded steep hills, and thieves had stolen cattle and kept them there until it was safe to dispose of them in the Gympie Goldfields. In fact it was an instance of the ' Happy Valley ' practice described in *Robbery under Arms*. The wild nature of the country is thus shown, and, so far as I can remember, this recess was only six or seven miles from the head station, and Cressbrook itself only about a hundred miles from Brisbane. What aided the thieves

was the nature of the grass, which recovered itself in twenty-four hours after being passed over, and this made tracking very difficult.

The stealing and duffing of cattle caused serious losses to the squatter, as the practice was common.

The country is rugged near the hills and was heavily timbered. Red deer were to be found, the descendants of a few sent by Queen Victoria from Windsor Park. I was able to stalk and get a stag.

Decidedly the English servant whom I incautiously brought with me was impressed by the immensity of the country, for when at the end of a day's duck shooting I told him he could ride back to the station quite near by, he was heard to grumble, ' Me go 'ome and be lost in the blooming bush! '

It is now thirty years since the days that I talk of, and motors, aeroplanes and ' wireless ' have revolutionised bush life. Mrs. Banks does a really important and valuable work in giving her reminiscences of the life lived in early days; it was very delightful in being unsophisticated and simple, and in having a social character of its own, full of good feeling and friendship, and of many interests.

One other record ought to be made, and I believe it has been started; a record of the rhythmic Aboriginal names, with translations giving their picturesque meanings: these should be preserved.

I have not had the pleasure of reading the transcript of the volume to which this is a foreword, but I am sure that Mrs. Banks, as a member of the well-known and highly respected McConnel family, will do justice to the claim of being a worthy daughter of Sunny Queensland.

LAMINGTON.

INTRODUCTION

THE early settlers in Australia have passed away, in many cases leaving no record; another generation has grown up to run its new race, and it has little leisure to look back on the starting post. Yet there are some on the course who treasure memories of pioneer days, and wish to preserve them from the dust of change and forgetfulness. In response to that wish I have put on paper, not a record, but notes of impressions as received on the mind of a child, without attempting to recast them in the light of later knowledge. The notes do not aim at completeness; they try, as far as possible, to keep faith with memory, and must remain fragmentary.

Such impressions could not be repeated to-day; they are of a time when the English of England, the Scottish of Scotland and the Irish of Ireland were English, Scottish or Irish in the land of their adoption as in their home land. To-day there are the English and Scottish and Irish in the home lands and the Australians in Australia, and the change affects the outlook even of a child. But as the beginning was from the older countries, impressions of earlier times should help to preserve a right perspective and keep alive memories of things bound up with the innermost fibre of Australian life.

A record would tell how Britain had followed her sons into the wilds with the instruments of her rule, with police, the post, protection from without and experienced administration, and continue to the present when she has no longer such calls to meet, but follows with interest and

sympathy the running of a race which she remembers is also in a measure hers. Reminiscences, however, are shadowy things, and may not be treated as a record. They are merely glimpses of an early settler's home, echoes of European voices happy in the discovery, surprise and humour of a new, strange life. They may be of value to some of the people of the Overseas, as well as to those of Europe, who remember many tales of the pioneering days of their older kinsfolk.

I

THE HOMESTEAD

THE house stood on a low ridge facing the river. Before it lay a rich flat, covered in times of heavy rains by flood waters, and beyond, across the river, level forest tracts spread on to a long line of hills, covered with patches of tall pine and slender 'scrub'[1] timber. The hills turned sharply to the right, and swelled to an imposing mass with a broad base and a peaked summit, which divided the river from its main tributary for a time and dominated surrounding miles of country; they were of an entrancing blue, the far-famed blue of Australia, which glows under the sun by day and turns purple in the evening light. The homestead ridge bent with the river to the right of the house, and was outlined by giant eucalyptus; the white stems of the gaunt trees faced west, ghost-like in the low level rays of a setting sun, and even demoniacal when storms of hail and wind blew up against the easterly sea-breeze, lashed their stems, and tossed their feathery tops like ribands against the sky.

Behind the house lay the out-buildings, stables for horses and the pure-bred stock, barns for hay and corn-cobs, sheds for ploughs, a school-house, a store where a morning and midday bell was rung, a blacksmith's forge, and a little row of wooden houses, 'the huts,' where the stockmen, the ploughman, the blacksmith and an old Irish carpenter lived with their wives and children. Be-

[1] In Australia a 'scrub' is a wood.

hind these huts lay a chain of lagoons; they seemed only to sleep with their lovely, lilac, gold-centred lilies resting on their surface, but really dawdled on till they joined a creek with dark trees and running water. This creek fell into the river lower down, so that the homestead was held by water on three sides and when the waters rose in flood was encircled by them. The creek was shaded by dark chestnut trees, a favourite haunt of the platypus which loved to lie with his furry back sun-baked above the water.

At this early time the garden was laid out in front of the house, which had two fronts; the other, the entrance front, facing west. From the tall bunya tree by the verandah broad gravelled steps led down to a long walk covered by a trellis with grape-vines: this gave on to a square garden with borders on each side; a huge mulberry tree stood in one corner, and there were four fig trees, two in the garden and one on each side of the vine-walk. The figs were large and luscious; at Christmas-time we gathered big laundry-baskets full of them, bursting with ripeness as they then were, and the trees made a happy playground for children when they hid from watching eyes behind the broad leaves, climbing with a sense of brave daring to the frailer branches farthest from the stem. The grapes were of excellent quality. My father had taken over the vines from a Swiss who had intended to establish a vineyard in Queensland, but had given up the project and returned to Europe. Bunches of the best grapes, Muscat, Sweet-water, Hamburgh and Isabella, were tied up in bags of coarse muslin to preserve them for table use, but we of the schoolroom and visitors picked and enjoyed the free bunches as they ripened. We children knew well which vines bore the sweetest fruit, a secret we did not always share with visiting friends!

At the entrance front a white-painted hand-gate opened on to a gravel walk leading to a porch. This was the way

into the hall, rather narrow, and lined with red cedar. When in Europe I pictured it in my memory as spacious, and was disappointed on returning to find that it was not really very wide, but it was of some height and cool, with a loft over to interrupt the fierce rays of summer suns. It had its importance, for many ceremonies were observed within its walls. Rooms opened off it, three on each side, with smaller rooms and a bathroom beyond. On the front towards the river was a good verandah, which turned at right angles by the bunya tree and met the lower verandah of the earliest part of the house. This was long and low, typical of the first settlers' houses, built of weather-boards with a shingled roof. It was one of the very first of its kind in the Queensland bush. Plain as these old houses are, they have a history and are looked on with great reverence; few dare to make any alterations in them. The dining-room was in this old house; it was lined with red cedar and ceiled, also, with red cedar. There was a wide brick fireplace, where wooden logs blazed on frosty winter evenings and smouldered comfortably during the day; on many a merry group did its light fall.

A side window looked on to a grass 'back,' the kitchen on one side, a laundry on another, with a paling fence dividing all from a fruit-orchard with peaches, quinces and pomegranates. Beyond came that indispensable element of a bush home, the fowlyard. At nightfall, when an unexpected visitor arrived, there would be a hurried call on the poultry, and a chicken or a turkey was caught and brought in as a guest-offering. An itinerant bishop explained that turkey was a repugnant article of food to him for many weeks after a long tour, as a noble bird had been dished up in his honour at every house he had visited, and he had been faithful to duty and gratitude in consuming the ample helpings served him. Our yard was lively with roosters, hens, turkeys, ducks, geese, pigeon and

quarrelsome guinea-fowl. Across the grass 'back' in front of the kitchen our cook walked proudly every evening with her basketful of new-laid eggs, rueful only when, guiltless of any attempt at punning, she told sadly of her 'eggsaster' if by some accident the eggs had been broken.

A staircase near the kitchen led to the loft over the hall by a balcony which faced south-west and looked over the horse-paddock. From this direction came the buggies of travellers or of our own people returning from journeys to the nearest town, or riders homing after long hours in the saddle. As the sun set and darkness closed in over the lagoons, while expected visitors or riders had not arrived, my younger brothers and I, nursery folk, would steal up to the balcony to listen for the sound of distant wheels, the cracking of a whip or the champing of tired horses against their bits. Sometimes the stars shone, and the eerie stillness of the bush had caught us in its spell before the awaited sounds were heard—we saw lights in the little wooden huts by the lagoons, heard a mopork call, and lived in dreamland till life and bustle stirred with the returning riders or buggy.

This upper region was a world apart to us. When the door of the loft was unlocked we crept in; we loved to look at the travelling trunks with strange labels, wooden cases and odd, miscellaneous bundles. Some naval trappings of my mother's brother, his gold-laced hat and sword, were kept in the loft long after his death and fascinated us. We were sometimes allowed to handle them by a lenient housemaid—they seemed to have some kinship with tales we read in our nursery books, and we imagined whole hosts of beings making use of such rare things in the distant world overseas. Less pleasing inmates were bats, but we had usually left this upper world for tea and bed before they spread their filmy wings.

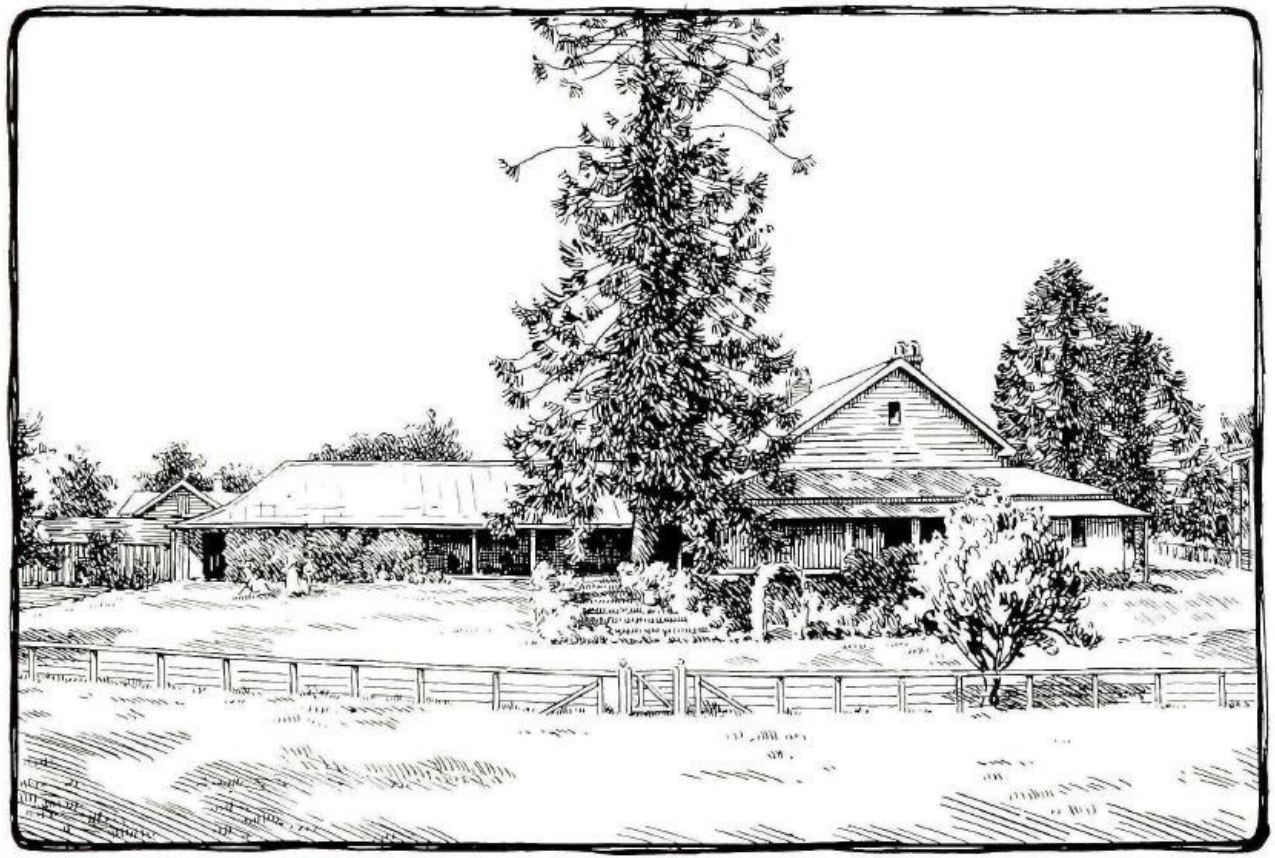
Through the hand-gate in front of the entrance porch was a small paddock which divided the 'house' from the

'cottage'; it had swings and a few silky oaks (Grevillea). The cottage was of brick, with a steep shingled roof; two or three gentlemen gaining experience of bush life and buyers of stock were lodged here under the efficient charge of a Scottish working-housekeeper. The cottage was a delight to me; violets grew along one wall, and there were flower-plots and loquat trees in front, with larger trees behind the kitchen bearing pink and white flowers, Roses of Sharon we called them. There was a latticed way from the kitchen to the dining-room, and a small pantry at one side. When I escaped from lessons at the house I made my way to the cottage, gathered violets or chatted with the housekeeper. She was a married woman whose husband had died soon after arrival in Australia. She disliked foreigners, and had no patience with a German girl who was helping her. My mother tried to make her more reasonable, and asked, 'Would you not feel stupid yourself if you were working in Germany and did not understand the language?' She answered, 'I daursay, Ma'am, a foreign langwidge, but the idea of a body no understanning common English!'

For a year or two an Englishman and a Scotsman were living at the cottage. One was a member of a well-known family of woolbrokers, the other came from Aberdeen, where his father worked extensive granite quarries, ruined in later times by the importation of foreign granite. When my father died my mother ordered the grey granite cross for his grave from those quarries, in memory of the owner's days spent in her bush home. As the housekeeper grew older she was suspected of making free with these gentlemen's whiskey, and the Englishman drew my mother's attention to this. When she remonstrated with her bondwoman about her behaviour, she said, 'It was na the Englishman's whiskey, puir body, that I had. I whiles took a wee drap of the good Scotch whiskey from the other gentleman.'

The cottage had many charms and some dangers, for snakes slept their winter sleep under the floor, and came out with the hot summer sun to bask on the grass or hide among the leaves of the violets, or twine themselves round the branches of the loquat trees.

From the gravelled walk at the entrance front of the house a croquet-lawn lay on the station side; its wide hoops and the still wider crinolines of the lady players spread bravely on the grass. Between it and the kitchen yard stood bushes of yellow jasmine, with shrubs of lilac Duranta and white Spirea; large clusters of Wistaria towered above this lower growth on the roof of a wood-shed and a dairy. A weeping willow filled one corner, a small American oak another. In the border there were moss roses and, beloved by all, a diminutive hedge of pink baby roses which we plucked to arrange with violets for evening button-holes. My parents, our governess and various visitors played when the day had grown cool; crinolines swept the lawn, balls rolled briskly from the mallets, contending voices argued points of the game, but gaiety was supreme for the most part and the contest was shortlived—for the hour between approaching sunset and darkness is a short one in a land where twilight is unknown.



THE HOUSE, CRESSBROOK, BRISBANE RIVER

(*face p.* 17)

II

THE PASTORALIST, HIS STOCK, AND OTHER CATTLE

My father, David Cannon McConnel, was a 'pastoralist.' In the family record he compiled and published for private circulation in 1861 he describes himself as a 'sheep and cattle farmer and landed proprietor in Moreton Bay, Queensland, Australia.' I do not know that his first intention on coming to Australia was to keep sheep and cattle, but once launched on this undertaking he never wished to give it up. While contemporaries of his own sold their lands and stock and returned to Europe to live, he could never decide to leave his adopted country for more than a year or two at a time. The lure of 'the Bush,' the sunshine, his lands and stock and their development held him too strongly to allow of any change. His last days before a sudden death in London were spent in planning fresh developments and new buildings in his distant home.

He nursed his plan to leave England for Australia in secret, and a year after inheriting his share of his father's fortune at coming of age he set off from London in a sailing ship. This was in 1840, before the days of steamers, and the voyage lasted four or five or even six months. Goodbye letters to his brothers and sisters were posted the evening before he went on board, and when the ship, outward bound, put in at Plymouth, he found some of his brothers awaiting him there with entreaties

that he should give up what seemed a wild adventure and an imperilling of his fortune. But he came of an adventurous stock: his grandfather had known adventure before him and had left his home in Galloway and its failing fortunes to throw in his lot with the rising world of machinery and factories in Lancashire. My father was not to be turned from his enterprise and went on his way. He had given his family no hint of his plan, and they did not imagine that the courses in natural science he had followed at Edinburgh University had attracted him as a budding explorer. The knowledge gained by this study made the new country doubly interesting, and before commencing pastoralist he travelled with noted explorers. The cares of stock management did not kill his taste for natural science; whenever possible he would devote Saturdays to geological excursions among the hills, and I was a proud little girl when invited to accompany him on my pony. He carried a satchel for fossils and stones, with a hammer as tool, and a canister for botanical specimens. We picnicked on sandwiches and cake at midday, after finding a shaded spring among rocks at the head of a mountain creek. Later he made a collection of salt- and fresh-water shells found by himself in Queensland, and it was of some value. A French conchologist with whom he was in correspondence coveted it, and offered a fine collection of French shells in exchange, but he elected to bequeath it to the science museum in Brisbane.

Whether it was his first intention or not, he decided soon after arriving in New South Wales to invest in sheep and cattle, and took his stock with drovers by compass over the range dividing that colony from what was known later as Queensland. He settled on the Brisbane River, not far from its head, and was not mistaken in his choice of country, which was long known as the best district for fattening cattle in south-east Queensland. The one mistake was in supposing it to be suitable also for sheep. It

was called Cressbrook, after the oldest brother's property in Derbyshire.

Two of six brothers followed my father to Australia; one, John, older by twelve years, was partner with my father in land on the Caboolture, married, and had a beautiful homestead and garden at Durundur. Another, Frederic, was three years younger; he also travelled with explorers, who named a northern mountain in his memory. He married in Scotland and did not return to Queensland, yet he loved it; I well remember the eucalyptus he grew in his hot-house in Scotland, and his habit of keeping letters from overseas folded in a drawer lest they should lose too soon the scent of gum-trees he said they had.

The sheep were a passing phase, but my father was soon well known for his fine Short Horn cattle. Pedigree stock were imported from England, some from the herd of his mother's relatives, the Houldsworths, in Yorkshire. For many years the first prizes for Short Horns at the annual shows in Brisbane fell to my father's stock; one fine roan cow in particular came back several years running with the champion riband. Young bulls and heifers were fed in stalls during the winter, fifty or sixty at a time, and fattened on turnips, pumpkins, mangel-wurzel and chaff, all grown on fields about the head station. Two or three Sundays before the fine animals were ready for their journey to the show-ground we visited the stables between tea and dinner to see them fed, when the head man in charge led us proudly round. We knew their names and loved to stroke the soft noses of the quietest beasts. When they returned with honours from the show, those which had not been sold at the show-grounds were led in procession through the station, and all the ' hands ' assembled to see them pass.

In those days we thought it heresy to speak of Hereford cattle; ' vulgar animals ' we called them, with their white faces and briskets and their longer horns. We looked

upon our cousin, whose father bred Herefords, as really inferior on that account. But this breed of stock gradually took the place on many properties of the more aristocratic Short Horn, for it had qualities necessary for meat-freezing processes when exportation began. It is also sturdier and better fitted to resist the rigours of drought when breeding is carried on at stations 'out west' and the young beasts are brought to the home stations for fattening only. It was with a feeling approaching dismay that we learnt that my oldest brother, who had returned from Cambridge and been appointed manager, had decided to substitute Herefords for our old friends, the noble Short Horns.

Camp-drafting, however, was exciting, whatever the breed of stock; it is the chief event in station life. When the buyer of fat bullocks arrived, the hour of trial had come. This was the final test of breeding and fattening, for he was an expert whose trained eye no defects could elude. He was inscrutable to children, for, like the gardener of their book of verse, 'he did not love to talk'; but he could make his clients keep the 'gravel walk' of quality, guessing the weight of a bullock at a glance.

He would arrive the evening before the day fixed for the camp-drafting, and found stockmen and horses ready for orders. Next morning all set out very early, the men stockwhip in hand, their meat, damper, and a small quart-pot for boiling water for tea made fast to their saddles; the cattle dogs followed. The first act was to collect the cattle on a camp at a chosen spot, where they were kept from breaking away by the dogs and one or two men with whips—bush cattle know the sound of the whip and obey it. The buyer rode through the mob and selected his bullocks one by one, indicating his choice by a nod or a movement of his whip. The stockmen drove out the approved beasts, and a smaller mob of these was gathered together a short distance away, waiting to be driven to the

cattle-yards for the night. Cattle herd in groups and associate together in small companies of their own choosing, so that it is no easy matter to separate them. A well-trained stock horse is an important factor in the game; he understands his work, and when he sees which animal has been selected will turn and double and head off his prey without much guidance from his rider. Strangers to this power of the horse are often taken unawares, and thrown ignominiously out of the saddle as the horse doubles unexpectedly after a refractory beast. This happening was looked upon as a humorous feature of a camp-draft.

Sometimes we were allowed a holiday from the schoolroom to look on, and had long hours on horseback. Sandwiches, scones and cakes with refreshing billy tea were our midday portion, and after the stockmen's short rest we rode behind them as they drove the unwilling beasts home to start off with the buyer next day. His task of travelling the bullocks to market was no easy one. The stock roads were wide, with allowance of grass on either side for grazing, and the drover had to make sure that his cattle would not starve on the way and that water was to be had at easy stages. The bullocks could not be hurried, and the buyer and his drovers often camped beside them at night.

We had followed them rather wearily home from the camp, the pacing hooves raised clouds of dust, the stockmen called to their mob and cracked their long whips, the dogs nipped the heels of beasts trying to run back to their old haunts, and it was often very late when we came to our journey's end: we were glad to slip out of our saddles and stretch our stiff limbs.

At other times there were cattle to be moved from one paddock to another where grass and water were more plentiful; for this there was riding in and out of gullies, over ridges, through groups of grass-trees, and among

fallen timber; no beast might be left behind. This also meant a long day's riding, but we rarely refused an invitation to go; there was less dust, as the cattle were not travelling by road, and we often rode home by a pleasant track. Sometimes we were caught by a heavy storm on the way, and galloped under the drenching rain as fast as our horses would carry us. On these occasions we rode our trusty horses with a loose rein, for their keen bush intelligence took them safely over logs and holes which we in our haste might not have noticed.

When the young cattle were brought in for branding, we used to go up to the yards for an hour or two to sit on the top rail of a fence and watch the drafting. There was a great stir and noise, men shouted, beeves bellowed, restive under the heat and teasing flies, dust rose in clouds about our heads; my father and brothers and their friends looked grotesque with cabbage leaves under their hats and a handkerchief tied round the crown to hang down and protect their necks at the back, their cheeks and noses reddened by the sun and covered with dust. If they had gone into the yards among the cattle to help to draft, they would often be seen making a rush for the fence and vaulting with all speed on to the top rail out of the reach of angry horns. A more peaceful experience awaited us when we paid our early morning visit to the milking stables with our nurse. On frosty winter mornings we relished the warm milk in our mugs, drunk all fresh and frothy from the cow.

But the fame of the working-bullock was equal to that of pedigree stock, fat cattle or the milch cow. Has anyone ever written of Australia without mentioning him? Large, patient, well-mannered, he was to be met with on every road and even in the streets of the larger towns. He was the only means of transit for heavy goods, and he alone could draw the pine logs from the mountains. He had his name, Daisy, Prince, Smiler, Punch, or another,

which the driver called to urge his shoulder to the yoke. His arrival was eagerly awaited at distant stations, for he was often delayed by drought or flood.

There were ten, twelve, fourteen or more bullocks walking in pairs in a long team; the driver walked beside them, for their pace was slow, and carried a long whip; he was quick to detect which beast might be shirking the load. All had to pull equally, lest the more willing should have the biggest share of the work, and the whip reminded any shirker of his duty. A dog or two went with the wagon, and a well-to-do driver usually had a boy to help him. The leading pair of bullocks wore each a bell, which was heard from a distance before the convoy came in sight, and at night, when the animals were unyoked and the whole company had camped by a creek or a water-hole, the leaders' bells kept the team from wandering far afield. The driver did not start on his long journey till he had a good load—wagons were unprofitable unless heavily laden; they carried articles of food, such as tinned salmon, jams, sugar, rice, equipment needed for the farm, anything in fact ordered from the town. On the return journey they were laden with hides and station produce. A wide tarpaulin was thrown over all as protection against dust and rain. There was a rest at midday, when the driver ate a frugal meal and dozed for a time under the shelter of his wagon; under this, too, was his cold water, carried in a coarse canvas bag, in which the evaporation of the water oozing through to the surface ensured refreshing coolness. The bullocks stood by, whisking their tails and rubbing their heads against their fellows' shoulders to ward off persistent flies. It was a fine sight to see a handsome team walk slowly along the road; when it passed through scrub country under the shade of trees the sunlight fell in patches on the brawny backs, dark, red, roan or black.

For me one bullock-team and -wagon was of supreme

importance, that of the hawker. He would arrive late of an evening, and ask permission to camp on the alluvial flat across the lagoon, in full sight of the women and children of the huts. The news soon spread, 'the hawker has come!' I could hardly control my impatience to be off to his wagon, but permission was given only after our afternoon lessons were over, when we set off with one of the maids. My two younger brothers and I had counted our savings and carried them in small purses. There were sweetmeats, knives, jews' harps, dolls, tops and such things to tempt us, and the maid had her commissions to buy reels of cotton, buttons, needles and ribands; I was allowed to choose these last for my hair. There was quite a dazzling medley, even a novel or two on sale, with tobacco pipes for the men and small frocks for children. The hawker did a brisk trade: he knew well what wares to bring, and we were sorry when the bells of his departing bullocks tinkled faintly and then were heard no more for a time; for he was the Emporium of the bush.

III

SHEEP AND SHEPHERDS

For some years sheep were kept on this east coast station. To-day no one would dream of putting sheep on country of this nature; they thrive best on downs and open plains, in dry air, where the grasses best suited to them grow; but in those early days experience was gained slowly, and my father dealt with his sheep in a spirit of high adventure. The sheep was then washed before being shorn; washing, shearing, and packing of bales pressed under a machine were all carried out at the head-station, and brought variety of employment. The sheep brought shepherds, too, for whom small huts were built some miles from the homestead, where they took charge of a flock. In such a hut the wife saw few friends, and my mother would drive out to visit her, taking a magazine or a book. I often accompanied her on these expeditions and enjoyed the kindly welcome of the shepherd's wife, who would produce boiled eggs and home-made jam from her store for tea. The road was often rough, and the little phaeton in which we drove creaked its reproaches as we jolted over ruts and stones. We alighted to gather wild flowers not seen nearer home, purple sarsaparilla, small white jasmine, dog violets, pewse vetches and fringed violets, these last in no way like real violets; their tall stem was crowned with lilac petals delicately fringed, bearing no scent. There were also yellow flowers like small puff balls with a strong scent, growing on a tough stem, but these were

common everywhere. We liked to watch the parrots, green with red heads or with red tips to their wings, or the rosella parrots, blue and yellow. When the eucalyptus was in bloom they were to be seen perched on the branches, tearing the flowers with their beaks.

The washing of the sheep was a fine undertaking. To-day the sheep 'which came up from the washing' are no longer seen; the fleece is unwashed before shearing, and 'scouring' the wool before it is ready for manufacture is a process which demands great skill and much technical knowledge. Modern sheep stations must be dull without the washing, after which the sheep would emerge white above the river bank and were driven on to green pasture for the night, their fleeces like snow against the grass. The river was dammed for the water-supply: three times my father built the dam and three times it was carried away by floods; after the third ravage it was not rebuilt. The water from the deep pool behind the dam was led first into a large cauldron, where it was heated over a log fire, from here it ran in a long narrow race, where soap and cleansing substances were mixed with it. Into the warm soapy water the sheep were driven one by one. Overhead was a shelter of dry brushwood on a light frame, in which gay willy-wagtails built their nests and twittered happily, undisturbed by the movement beneath. The washers stood on either side of the race. They used thick pads at the end of long wooden sticks, like broomsticks, and prodded the fleece of the sheep as he was driven forward, trying to keep his amazed and startled face above the water. He climbed out at last to find himself in a pen, but his troubles were not over; he was pushed down a slanting sheet of galvanised iron and seized by two men, standing dry in barrels below, who held him by his front and hind legs under a shoot of clean cold water, which carried away the soap-suds and prepared him for his night in the fields.

When there was a fresh in the river the water rose and poured over the dam. Men went down with nets and caught the river-fish as they were carried down by the swift current and passed over the dam's edge. This was exciting to watch, and what with the sheep-washing and the fish, the dam played a lively part in station life. The river seemed desolate at this part after it had disappeared, yet we loved to fish for eels and jewfish in the little pools behind the rotting timbers of the ruin, and to catch the tiny fresh-water shrimps.

The day after the washing, the sheep were driven over the lagoons across a wooden bridge which led to the wool-shed and a press. On the first day of shearing it was the custom for the ladies of the house to visit the shed and greet the shearers with a first footing, usually in the shape of two bottles of rum. We often had visitors with us at this time, and the expedition over the lagoon bridge to the wool-shed was an event of note. Shearing lasted some days: I imagine the speed of the shearer was not then so remarkable as it has since become. When the sheep had departed, and the wool had been pressed and packed in bales on to wagons ready to leave for town, the shed was cleared for a dance. A small upright piano was brought over the bridge from the bachelors' drawing-room at the cottage, and the ball was opened by a quadrille, in several sets, in which the shearers and all joined. My parents played duets for four hands on the piano to accompany some of the dances. I remember well the runs and graces of the oft-repeated piece, *Les Rats*, on these occasions. Sets of lancers were danced, too, and country dances, at which a master of ceremonies, one of our leading ' hands,' instructed us when ' to set to partners and swing.' He may have been reviving some old folk dance now lost and irrecoverable, but we thought not of those things. Also polkas were danced, and occasionally an Irishman would dance a jig.

There were other festivities on the station, but none more sprightly than the wool-shed dance. With the passing of the sheep from this district departed the washing at the river, the dam, the wool-shed and the visits to the shepherd's wife, leaving a trace only in the memories of our childhood.

In spite of the lively activities centred in his woolly back, the sheep is not in himself a very interesting beast. He has passed with a pleading gentleness into the poetry of Europe, largely through the shepherd life of the Old Testament and the imagery of the Psalms; and certainly the lamb, after the first stage of disproportionate legs, is among the most attractive of young animals. We saw no lambs, however, as the lambing took place at the outstation, and one sheep seemed merely a counterpart of another. His soporific quality is quoted in the adage which bids the sleepless count sheep jumping over a gate as a means to induce slumber. Yet our sheep overseer declared he knew his sheep by their faces and could easily distinguish them—familiarity thus breeding insight. The fine merino with his imposing ram was indeed a triumph, and was the real basis of Australian prosperity. He was the child of capital and enterprise, bred by men with big ideas and the means of carrying them out, while still unmolested by hostile legislation. The outlook of the small grower is not the same; he lives from day to day and, with all his marvellous industry and capacity for toil, is without the margin of leisure and money necessary for enterprise. Australia owes a big debt to her capitalist settlers who built up the herds on which her material life depended. Without them progress would have been impossible, and their courage and cheeriness under reverses contributed worthy elements to the national character.

MRS. DAVID C. McCONNEL AND HER OLDEST SON, JAMES HENRY McCONNEL

(*face p. 29*)

IV

THE REALM OF THE MISTRESS

INDOOR occupation was varied and constant. One says indoor—yet it was carried out for the most part on the wide verandah, shaded from the sun by blinds. These came from Java or Japan; they were made of long strips of cane painted green and rolled up in the evening by cords on small pulleys. On the verandah peaches were stoned for jam, oranges peeled for marmalade and quinces were carefully pared and cored for jelly. There was a wide table where the many kerosene lamps were washed and trimmed every morning, and set ready to be carried to their respective rooms at night. There was the indispensable treadle sewing machine, and in a cool corner, in a draught, stood a filter with a tap and a tin pannikin, near it a large porous water-jar swathed in damp flannel for evaporation.

Near the kitchen was a dairy with pans of milk set for cream, and a churn heard at work early in the day. In hot weather the butter was long in coming, and the churning was an exercise in patience.

Once a year there came a household event of importance, the preparation of arrowroot. The plant was grown in the river bed, and when the root had been ground or grated, the damp substance was laid out on trays and trestles along a side verandah to dry in the sun. It was carefully disposed on sheets of paper laid on linen cloth, which was folded over it at night to keep off early birds

and predatory insects. On each tray lay a large wooden spoon which the passer-by was expected to use in turning over the arrowroot, now a fine white powder, shining in the sunlight. This was highly prized for puddings and also as a food for invalids. Many small tins of it were dispensed by my mother to the men's wives as special nourishment, or for ailing children. I was too small at this time to use the spoon effectually, but watched the stirrers with lively interest; being once induced to pause and stir, they were persuaded also to talk!

There was a store-room, kept under lock and key. Household stores were measured and dealt out on Saturday mornings, and a list was kept on a slate of groceries running short; these had to be ordered well ahead, as they were to be brought by bullock-wagon many miles from the nearest town. Ants loved the stores, and sweet things were placed on stands with feet in saucers of water which the ants failed to cross.

There was a laundry and a good laundry-maid, whose copper was steaming with hot water and soap-suds very early on the morning of the washing. She was an expert ironer and shirt dresser. In those days excellent maid-servants were to be had, and were hired straight off the ship by which they had arrived. The life they entered upon was by no means dull; there were several families living round the homestead and many men employed.

My mother controlled the household activities and led a very busy life. She visited any sick woman or child within her reach and gave medical advice. Bush homes always possessed a volume of medical instructions, faithfully resorted to at need, for the district doctor lived many miles away and had to be sent for. If there had been an accident by a fall from a horse or careless use of an implement, a boy would be sent off at a gallop for the doctor, and an anxious time was passed before his arrival. I remember how our thoughts were once led into another

channel during an hour when all was hushed about the room of a friend of my brother, who was dangerously ill with concussion of the brain. The laundress stole on tip-toe along the verandah to whisper her question, 'Is the poor gentleman getting conscientious?'

My mother was equal to any emergency, and never lost her presence of mind. A dramatic scene by the river-bed lives in my mind's eye to-day as clearly as the day it took place. We had gone down for an evening bathe, my two younger brothers and myself, with our nurse, the laundress, a younger maid, and my mother in charge. We younger ones had bathed and were standing on a grassy knoll being vigorously rubbed down with Turkey towels. The laundress, Anne, and the young girl were in the water, when suddenly we heard a scream, and looked round to see the young girl out of her depth and sinking in a deep pool. She gave an agonised cry for help before she disappeared, but Anne backed away to the bank, calling, '*I* can't help you, *I* can't help you!' My mother leapt into the water, her crinoline making a great splash, and called, 'Anne, Anne, you foolish woman, stand and hold my hand at once!' This Anne did, her knees shaking under her, while my mother went on to the edge of the pool, holding out her other hand to the sinking girl, whose head now appeared again above the water. She was rescued and brought safely to the bank. We watched, awe-inspired, from the knoll; it seemed as if the end of all things had come when my mother, the ruler of the house, the upholder of seemliness and order, was seen making her way through the river, a wide wake following her, her shady garden hat still on her head, her crinoline only half submerged and moving up or down with each step forward. Consternation held us breathless for some time after her triumphant return to dry land.

Another evening when we were playing croquet a messenger came in haste to say that the coachman's Irish wife

was in great distress as her baby was afflicted with terrible pains which would not be allayed. My mother set off at once for the hut, took the child on her knee and began to undress it; it did not look very ill, but screamed at every movement. As the clothes were taken off they were found fastened with pricking pins, and as the pricking ceased the child turned to my mother and smiled its relief. At this the baby's mother fell on her knees, and said, ' Sure it's a blessed angel from holy Mary in Heaven you are, Ma'am! ' My mother's reply was of an admonitory nature.

The school was visited regularly. It was one of the Provisional schools supported by a government grant made to such stations as could prove they had the necessary number of children. The school-house and a small house for the teacher were provided by the owner of the station. A female teacher was engaged, who had been installed some time before at my parents' cost, and was liked and trusted. It was, of course, very desirable that the full number of children should be maintained to secure the payment of the teacher's salary. During a visit of my mother to town, when she was to engage a new gardener, my father received a disturbing telegram, ' Gardener and wife arrive to-morrow at Gatton five boys.' My father thought this was a move on the part of my mother to keep up the number of children for the school, and was inclined to demur, for the gardener's house stood in the Cottage garden where five boys would run riot. However, on wiring for fuller particulars, he received the comforting reply that ' boys ' was a mistake for ' boxes,' and the telegram was to explain that the buggy would not suffice to bring the gardener's household goods to his new home.

Hospitality is a feature of every bush home, a virtue my mother as a Scotch woman had no need to learn. She was of Highland descent, her parents being, one a

Macleod of the Assynt branch, the other a Rose, whose grandfather was of Kilravock. One day, when vexed with us, her children, she called us Lowlanders; needless to say my father was at that moment out of hearing! A Highlander's hospitality is part of his creed.

Surveyors at work in the district were our Sunday guests; they joined us for our midday meal, sat with us afterwards on the verandah, enjoyed water melons and talked. Travellers from the Upper Brisbane River or from the Burnett took our home as the first stage on their way to town, and if they were known to us were lodged in the house; we had visits also from clergy and from friends. These last were a source of joy to me; immediately on their arrival I planned walks and rides for days ahead, as I was sometimes allowed to act as guide. I astonished and embarrassed my mother by drawing gravely near a fresh visitor at a quiet moment after morning prayers in the dining-room to ask, 'How long are you going to stay?' Outings had to be organised.

I had many friends won during these visits, and remember specially two elderly ladies who took me in hand for reading lessons on the verandah when the governess was away. We read in pleasant books, and they told me tales of their early life in England, Ireland or India. They had humour, grace and charm, and I looked forward to my short hours of instruction from them with delight.

There were other guests whom we did not like so well, ladies with young children whom it was our duty to amuse. They would not always fall in with our plans, they fell over logs, tore their clothes in the fences and cried, which we thought disgusting. We felt it hard that we were not allowed to complain of any act of theirs, and were occasionally well pleased when they went away, for then speculation began as to the character of the next visitors. But for the most part we were happily entertained by our pleasant guests, and gained in many subtle

ways by intercourse with them. Some gave their names to places associated with them. Mrs. Barney's Rocks commanded a fine view of the river. Major Barney had been post-master at Brisbane, and his widow, a fragile, well-educated gentlewoman, held the post after her husband's death. She was a favourite visitor, and my father often took her for short rides on a quiet horse during a cool evening. On one of these rides she spoke of her enjoyment of the outlook from the rocks, and they were named after her; they are known to-day as Barney's Rocks.

Dayspring, a fern-fringed pool of clear water at the foot of a steep rock among the mountains, commemorated Mr. and Mrs. Day. They were intimate friends and favourite visitors of ours. Mr. Day, brother of a London judge, held an official position under the Government in Brisbane, and my mother's first days there were associated with his wife, then Miss Buttenshaw. Mr. Day's fun and humour made him a welcome companion on a long ride.

Maggie's Delight was a wooded dell by the river, where we picnicked with Miss Maggie Raff, not far from the house. She had travelled out from Scotland to friends already established in Brisbane under my parents' care, and always preferred the tamer parts of our district.

Bessie's Nook told of a meeting on the river with Mr. and Mrs. Francis Bigge. Mr. Bigge, with his two brothers, owned Mt. Brisbane station; his wife, 'Bessie,' was a fine horsewoman, well known on hunting fields in Leicestershire; her animation and delight in the amusing side of bush experiences enlivened our social gatherings.

Miss MacLeish's Waterhole was a pool about five miles from the head station, where our governess of that name was found watching wild duck when she had lost her way, and waited patiently till searchers found her.

No name lives to commemorate neighbours at Colinton, a station higher up our river, but the owners were frequent

visitors. Mr. Forbes was always abreast of the latest Science Magazines, and his wife was an authoress. The home and gardens at Colinton were kept in beautiful order, and hospitality there was a valued experience. A daughter of this house is now wife of Sir Thomas Whitson, the public-spirited Lord Provost of Edinburgh. My mother was a life-long friend of Mrs. Forbes, and often visited her in later years in Scotland.

The Bowman family was also well known. Mr. Bowman was manager of Mount Brisbane, the property of Mr. F. Bigge and his brothers; now the estate of my brother, the late Eric W. McConnel.

Close settlement has effaced some of these names, but one or two remain, and will be found to-day in the motorist's district map. Some of them have already undergone changes which may give rise to explanatory legends in future times, and conjure up visions of monsters which did not exist. I think Barney may become a monster—and so may Brummy, a colonist from Birmingham, who gave his name to a large lagoon. The Bunyip claimed a deep pool, and fearsome tales were told by the blacks of his raids, but he was no visitor of ours, though playing an important part in serious discussions and conjectures as to his origin. The dragon in the waterhole or in recesses of the rocks has been a feature of primitive legend of all times, but not many such beings share with the Bunyip the honour he has of giving his name to a species of wheat.

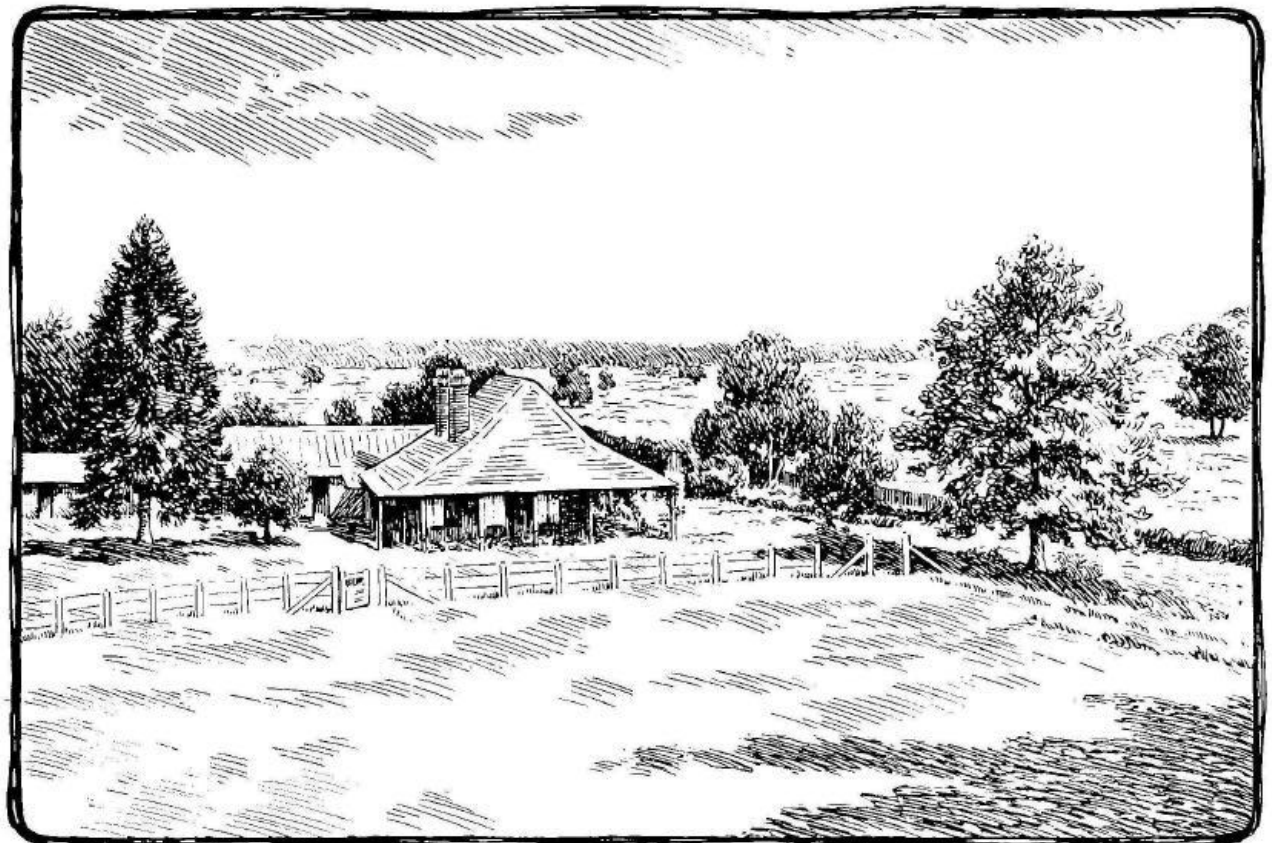
V

SUNDAYS AND THE CLERGY

CLERGY representing the various Christian churches visited us. At a later date my mother attempted to establish a United Christian Church on a small scale in a little chapel built about a mile away from the head station, near the lagoon. Closer settlement had begun, and selectors, men who had selected a portion of land for settlement, drove in with their families to attend the services. It was arranged that a Church of England, Presbyterian, and Wesleyan or Methodist clergyman should conduct a service and preach as his turn came round. On the surface this plan seemed successful, but it was noticed that the peculiar tenets of one preacher were vigorously attacked or patiently explained away by another the following Sunday, and disagreement was so much the more noticeable.

During my earlier childhood a service was held every Sunday morning or evening in the hall of the house. My father read the service of the Book of Common Prayer and a short sermon from a book or a magazine, and there was an American organ to accompany the singers of hymns and chants. Occasionally there was a singing practice, which pleased the Kanakas. 'Here we supper grease and rain,' they would sing with earnest zeal, while the hymnbook spoke of suffering 'grief and pain.'

The children of the men working for my father sat side by side with us at ten o'clock in a Sunday school,



CRESSBROOK, THE BRICK COTTAGE

(*face p.* 36)

carried on with all the dignity of tickets and prizes. If there was a clergyman with us on Sunday he took the service instead of my father and preached. My nurse curled my hair and dressed me carefully for these events. I was decked with gay ribands and wore a crinoline, which was extremely difficult to control when I knelt; I wore it proudly, however, among our guests on the verandah during the afternoon. It was kept for Sunday wear.

The visiting clergy also conducted the prayers before breakfast. One reverend gentleman always prayed for rain and besought that the 'waterholes' should be filled up; this petition we listened for and condemned, we thought it unseemly.

The Roman Catholic priest, a Frenchman, was a special friend; he played marbles with us under the bunya tree, told us stories, and was at all times cheery and amusing. My parents welcomed him for their Roman Catholic families, whom they had provided with Douay Testaments. The drawing-room at the Cottage was lent for the service of the mass; I loved to steal on to the verandah outside, listen to the prayers in an unknown tongue and peep through the Venetian blinds at the lighted candles and the priest's dress in the darkened room. I had been told that there was something not quite right about it and did not speak of it; it remained mysterious and incomprehensible.

One or two rousing utterances from sermons in the hall stirred my imagination, and I drew terrifying pictures of the horrors of eternal punishment for the benefit of my younger brothers in the nursery. I described sinners as arranged at the last day in a long row on a bank by a river running fire and brimstone. They stood awaiting God, Who came presently with a long rod and tapped each in turn, sending him like a ninepin into the flames below. But I was overheard delivering this masterpiece to my brothers trembling before me, and forbidden to repeat it.

Another product of religious musing we contrived to keep secret. We decided that we were indulging too frequently in little quarrels among ourselves and should take steps to end them. After long consideration we determined to take a solemn oath to quarrel no more. I pointed out that, according to the Gospel, to swear by any holy being and then to break our oath would amount to blasphemy, but if we swore in the first instance by the Son of Man we might still be forgiven if we were unable to stand by our oath. We met in secret one Sunday evening before going to bed and swore by the Son of Man to quarrel no more. After some weeks we fell, and then fell again. We concluded we must proceed to sterner measures, and judged that the only course open to us was to swear by the Holy Ghost, for to fall after this grave oath would be unforgivable, we should be Anathema Maranatha. Even I was unable to explain what these words meant, but they sounded alarming and had often filled us with awe during services in the hall. We met again in secret and took this final oath, believing that the terrors of Anathema Maranatha would keep our feet in the narrow path. Alas! We fell again! We then kept our guilty secret hidden—we dared not tell what we knew must be true, that we were beyond hope for this world or the next. Sometimes we discussed our fate, and decided that at least we were now free to quarrel, since nothing we did could affect our future. It was only two years later, when we were attending schools in Edinburgh, that one of us asked advice on our position; the amusement caused by the confession, which was heard with whole-hearted laughter, at last dispelled our fears, and we ceased to tremble at the memory of our nursery tribunal.

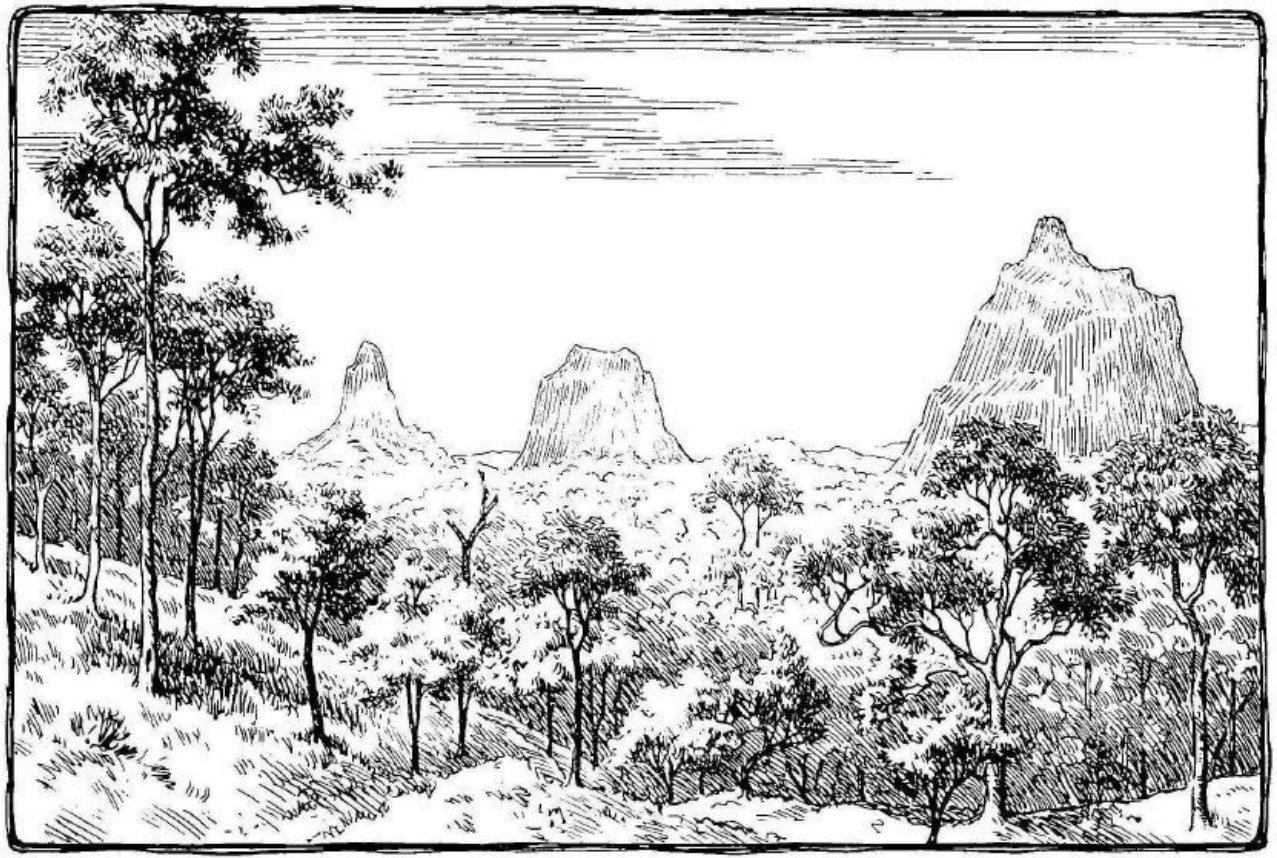
A visit from Bishop Tufnell led to an event of an unusual kind. He arrived with Mrs. Tufnell late one afternoon on his way to Brisbane from the Burnett River and Colinton, a station higher up on the Brisbane River.

Some beautiful parrots had been collected on the journey, and were taken carefully out of their small cages at night. We had an aviary at the end of the long verandah running past the dining-room and two bedrooms beyond. In the centre stood a pole round which fresh branches of eucalyptus were fastened for our pet parrots and the native bear, a sloth which slept during the day and awoke to great activity at night. After dinner, as we sat out on the upper verandah, the bishop took a small hand-lantern and the aviary key to carry a saucer of food to the parrots; he wished to tend them himself. After a few minutes there was a crash of broken glass and a surprised cry from the aviary: the bishop came running towards us along the lower verandah with the native bear clinging to one gartered leg. He exclaimed, 'Oh, Mrs. McConnel, what demon have you in the aviary?' One or two gentlemen hurried down the steps to relieve him of the claws, sharp claws, and of remarkable strength and tenacity. The sloth climbs the tall smooth stems of the eucalyptus and drives his claws deep into the bark; he will not be shaken free of his hold, and it was not easy to detach him from his victim. Startled by the light of the lantern and determined to punish the invader, he sprang on to the calf of the bishop's leg as he bent down with the saucer of food; during the flight he clung ever closer, fearing to be thrown to the ground. At last, however, he was induced to relinquish his hold and the bishop was set free, quite willing to appreciate the humour of the situation. The aviary door had been left open, but no birds escaped; the parrots were to be seen in later years in a glass case in the hall of Mrs. Tufnell's drawing-room at Oxford. She had witnessed the bishop's adventure from the verandah and had not forgotten it.

On a memorable Sunday Queen Victoria's deer were turned out on the river flats. They were a fine stag and five does of Red Deer presented to Queensland in recog-

nition of the name given to the young colony in the Queen's honour. The Government selected the range of hills in front of Cressbrook as a suitable home for the deer, and they were sent up country as soon as they had been landed after their long voyage. They arrived with their keeper on Saturday night, and he asked that his charges should be let out of their cages at the first possible moment. They were taken across the river on Sunday morning, a long procession following in buggies, drays, spring carts and a wagonette; boys rode on horseback; every man, woman and child on the place was present. All were dressed in their best, and the ceremony of releasing the deer passed off well on a radiant, sunny morning.

Our bush Sundays were happy in spite of the restrictions which hedged them round; we might not run, nor gather fruit, nor sing songs, nor read anything but books on religion or the magazines laid out on the verandah table for Sunday reading. But we had our friends to talk to, and took our meals with our elders. All work had ceased, and the observance of things above the common routine brought a sense of dignity and restfulness into our lives. We enjoyed helping to arrange the chairs in rows in the hall for the morning service and to lay out the books. The short sermon, read from a book and probably more delectable than many another preached throughout the world on that day, was no burden to us; we often heard one by Charles Kingsley. We sat, looking out on the wide, quiet bush, and listened—the earth and its promise were fair in our eyes.



THE GLASS HOUSE MOUNTAINS, QUEENSLAND

From the sketch-book of Donald Thistlethwayte, Esq.

(*face p.* 41)

VI

THE BLACKS

THE coloured folk living about us were our friends. We spoke of them as 'the blacks.' One woman, Kitty, came to scrub the kitchen and verandah floors; she said I was her dead baby girl 'jumped up white,' and treated me with every mark of affection. She had a keen sense of humour and we often laughed together. Her husband, Piggy, worked at odd jobs to earn pence for tobacco; Kitty also smoked and had her pipe, and they had rations from the station store. They camped with others of their tribe on the river bank near the station, speared fish for us, and walked about with their blankets over their shoulders, watching the strange doings of the white man. They were often away for weeks at a time on a Bunya-nut feast on the hills, or celebrating a Corroboree attended by all the members of the tribe. One night a Corroboree was held on the flats across the river and we were invited to look on. King Billy himself, a tribal chief, carried me on his shoulders over the river, and we walked on through long 'blady grass' to the camp. The gins (women) sat squatting cross-legged on the ground, and sang with harsh, nasal voices, striking their hands on their thighs with a loud slap to mark time for the dance. The men danced, moving in a circle round the fire, their tatoo markings plainly visible. They wore feathers on their heads, and during the time we were there held their spears in their right hands on a level with their shoulders,

thrusting them forward in a straight line and stamping each foot in turn on the ground, with the thrust aimed at an imaginary prey. The spear was drawn back after each thrust. Their movements were swift, angular and regular, and were continued without interruption during the many times the circle moved round the fire.

This dance is interpreted as a magic rite to ensure luck for the kangaroo spearing on the following day. The firelight dancing on the men's dark limbs and on the faces of the women, whose eyes shone through the dark night, made the scene a vivid one.

This tribe never molested either our cattle or our sheep. Its rights to camp in the old haunts, to hunt kangaroos, opossum and fish, and to hold the Bunya-nut feast on the hills were respected, and it respected my father's property in return. If a tribe was chased away from its native district, its own place on the river or among the hills, there was no place for it anywhere else. The surrounding country belonged to other tribes, who allowed no trespasser on their preserves; the displaced tribe became outcast and homeless, and often died miserably. The first settler knew nothing of these tribal laws, of the totem's home, or of the virtue pertaining to certain places. We must weigh this fact in passing judgment on him. He found fires started from a camp raging through his grass in the dry season, when there was no hope of rain to set it growing again, and this meant heavy loss of stock. He thought it quite reasonable to rule the tribe out of the station boundaries, since he imagined the blacks to have the freedom of all Australia, and might as well look for Bunya-nuts on one hill as another. When the black man refused to give up his old camping ground, grew revengeful and speared cattle, or even men, he was driven away as an enemy and, in some places, shot. It was not till years after my childhood that I learnt of cruelties to the blacks, and I refused at first to believe it

possible. This I know, that there were very many places where the natives were treated with kindness and affection, and that much of the harshness was due to ignorance and misunderstanding. But for actual cruelty, which unfortunately cannot be denied, no excuse is possible.

Across the hills from our home lived a tribe which had been treated with severity;[1] there had been shooting on the part of the white men and spearing on the part of the blacks. My father, as a good bushman, wished to ride to Brisbane by an untried route, ' blazing ' a track through the scrub trees on the hills till he hit the Caboolture district on the other side and so on to town. He had never feared the blacks as they knew and trusted him. But now the chief of his home tribe, to whom he spoke of his plan, warned him against it. He called my father by his Christian name; ' David,' he said, ' bel you go along o' mountain.' He knew that the tribe over the hill had vowed to kill any passing white man as their foe, but my father did not believe there was any real danger, and set out on his quest. The chief insisted on running by my father's stirrup till he reached the top of the ridge, then stood and said, ' Look, David! ' He pointed out movement in the long grass which only a trained eye would note, and called aloud a greeting in his own tongue. Two or three black men came out from the grass where they had lain hidden, their spears in their hand. One of the men was the chief of the tribe, and ' David ' was assigned to his care. A safe passage through the hostile country was assured; alone, my father would have been speared in the back. In that same district several shepherds were speared to death as a reprisal.

When the blacks wished to bring their spears with them without exciting suspicion, they would draw them along the ground, the spearheads caught between their toes, and hidden by the grass.

[1]Before Capt. the Honble. Louis Hope was owner of this station, Kilcoy.

The blacks did not spear our cattle, but they were very fond of pumpkins. They would camp beside the cultivated paddocks and help themselves to the pumpkins at night. My father planned a means of frightening them. He fixed an empty melon to the end of a stout umbrella-stick, cutting holes in the rind for eyes and a slit for a mouth. He spread the umbrella open, fastened the handle firmly to a stout pole, and covered all over with a white sheet. A lighted candle in the melon head shone through the eye-holes, and my father, hidden under the sheet, and the pole upright in his hands, walked slowly in the darkness to the camp, muttering strange sounds. At first the blacks were alarmed and were preparing for hasty flight with screams and howls, when a daring boy crept up and detected my father's boots. At this there was a chorus of laughter, and the blacks remained in their camp for the night; the attempt to 'fright them with urchin-shows' had failed. They were, however, requested to move their camp to the other side of the station next day, as the only means of saving the winter food for the young stabled stock.

King Billy was a tall, rather handsome black. He wore a brass plate on his chest hanging from a chain round his neck and inscribed with his kingly name. This was a gift from the Government. I knew he was often in the riverbank scrub, where grew a beautiful red berry, known as a raspberry. Its habit of growth resembled that of the European raspberry, but the grains were smaller and the flavour was more pungent. The blacks called it 'berrum.' I asked King Billy to bring me some fruit from the scrub, and promised to reward him with a silver sixpence. As I stood one evening on the green 'back' by the kitchen, I heard him call over the fence, 'Missy! Missy! Me been gettem berrums!' I thought they would have been brought in a clean billy-can, but that was not King Billy's notion. He held out to me the

large, soiled, red kerchief he usually wore about his woolly head, and in this the crushed berrums looked anything but inviting. I gave him his sixpence, feeling much depressed. I could not hurt his feelings by casting a slur on his kerchief, of which he was very proud. No doubt he had meant to honour me by using it.

John Bull was a black with a disfigured nose and no wife; he was often away tending sheep, but when he was on the head station he had a small one-roomed hut of slabs to himself. I believe the unfortunate appearance of his nose was due to an accident while in my father's employ, and he received special consideration on that account. He confided to my father that he was going on an expedition to Mt. Brisbane, a neighbouring station, to woo a 'Mary' (wife), and asked for the loan of a tall grey hat he had seen among my father's possessions. The hat was old and worn, and my father made him a gift of it. He set proudly off for the 'Mary,' but his suit did not prosper and he returned rejected. Not even the grey hat had overcome the repugnance to his comic appearance; my father offered his sympathy, but the blacks in the camp did not hide their amusement.

Some years later I held a class on one or two evenings a week for two native black boys and a Kanaka. The boys were anxious to learn; they were in receipt of wages for droving cattle, and desired above everything to have an account at a bank like a white man. There were many interruptions, as their work took them away travelling by road, but they always presented themselves in clean, white shirts at the reading class when they came back. They read on patiently for some time in the primers, and learnt to spell bat, cat, rat, mat and such monosyllables without enthusiasm; but when they were promoted to a reader in which words made stories, their excitement was great. Their eyes shone with delight, and they asked me to let

them take the little books away with them to read by the camp fire at night. Progress was then more rapid, and they went on to the mastery of the multiplication tables. I left now for Europe and when I returned they had moved away west. They were full of fun and mischief; the younger boy, in particular, played pranks on the sheep overseer, and would roar with delight if the older man was caught unawares.

There were other blacks whom we knew, but none were more friendly than Piggy, Kitty, John Bull and King Billy. They greeted us by clapping their hands when we returned from a short visit to town.

They had blankets, and the chiefs handsome brass plates bestowed on them by the Government. They set up humpies of bark as a camp round their fire; when they moved the gins carried the camp furniture, as well as the 'dilly-bags' made of rushes, in which the babies slept peacefully, resting on their mothers' shoulders. Thus the men were left free to spear animals for food.

We were not quite sure how they treated their dead. When I knew them they had been for thirty years in touch with white men, and had given up some of the older customs.

There lived with us also eight Kanakas, men from South Sea islands, who were hired for a given number of years and then sent back to their homes. They were gentle, happy-natured men, worked steadily and gave no trouble. They had a little house of their own, with bunks for beds, and good blankets, and a vegetable garden. The man who came with the two native boys to the evening class seemed less intelligent than they. His black skin shone and his shirt was spotless. He liked to sit still and make pothooks in his copy-book, and was vexed when I promoted him to letters for he would not learn their names. 'Me not want know name, me like make 'im,' he expostulated, and guided his pen carefully through

the intricacies of every letter from A to Z, sublimely indifferent to their meaning.

My mother had Testaments for the Kanakas in their own language, and had an evening class and one at 5 a.m. in summer to teach them to read. When the time came for them to return to their islands, they handed over to her some of their savings and commissioned her to buy presents to take to their families. Some wanted red flannel dresses for their wives, beads and small garments for children, tin whistles and scissors. One, a bachelor, explained that he wanted a black coat, 'cut away behind like Mr. Harry's.' This was a coat he had seen my oldest brother wear on some gala evening, probably during a Governor's visit; it had made a deep impression on him and his request was urgent, but he was persuaded in the end to be content with something more useful and of much less cost.

One man, Willy South Sea, the scribe who loved pothooks, begged to be allowed to remain with us. He was a favourite with everyone, and when, old and grey-haired, he was lost on an out-station during a heavy flood, a long search was made for him, and there was much sorrow when he was not found.

One of the Kanakas, George, was a special friend of our early childhood. It was his duty to drive down to the fields or the river on one business or another in a spring-cart, and he liked to take us children with him. We would leave the cart and walk between the long rows of tall, tasseled maize, festooned with convolvus, dark blue and white, the slender bending leaves still wet with dew. As the maize ripened there were cobs to gather, their golden grain set in comely even rows about the pithy core, and there were wild flowers to pluck, growing along the ground. Our drive with George was a much-prized adventure.

VII

PETS

In country life all the world over pets play a leading part, they are perhaps most eagerly sought and trained where the native birds and animals are still strange to man and little known. As a domestic pet we knew the kangaroo intimately and found him eminently lovable, but in general he was thought of as an uncouth and ungainly being, the male famous for his jumps, the female for the pouch in which she carried her young. The poet Southey, in an early poem, described a land where ' the kangaroo's sad *note* sounds in the distance,' and many years later, during the Great War, friendly people discussed the kangaroo *feathers* in the Australian soldiers' hats. But such errors were not for bush people, who have the deer-like head and eyes and sleek coat of the kangaroo in daily view.

Our tame kangaroo was called Jock; he lived by our side on the verandahs, and slept, when the nights were cold, on a mat, during the warmer weather on the gravel walk. He would set off at dawn to the fields to forage for himself, and return to lie near the dining-room door and wait for the family to assemble for breakfast. His long heavy tail, wet with dew, left untidy traces on the verandah, and he sometimes met with attacks from a housemaid's broom. If he got a chance he would make his way to the breakfast table, tip over the milk jug with his small paws, and drink the milk. Before dinner at night he would steal in to take the pieces of bread set out on the table, which he

liked to nibble. As he wore a little bell, however, on his collar, these excursions were soon detected. He was friendly with the dogs, and would lie close beside them on the gravel walk, while the cat curled herself up between his paws. My youngest brother was a very small child at this time and unsteady on his feet; Jock would watch him with interest, and one evening, when he thought a dog came too near, intervened and put his arms round him. The sewing machine never failed to attract Jock: when it was at work he would shuffle quietly along the verandah, his tail dragged after him, to stand and watch the treadle wheel turn, trying to touch it with his paw.

He was a fine, well-grown animal, and stood five feet high when upright. He had a mate for a time, Jill; she was rather shy of human beings and dogs and kept at a distance. One evening she was missing, and Jock was at the breakfast table early next morning to steal bread. For a day or two he went off with a piece in one paw to the maize field. He was followed along a row through the tall maize, and found beside Jill for whom he had carried the bread. Her leg was broken, and nothing could be done for her; she had to be killed.

When chased by dogs and hard pressed, the female kangaroo will take her young from her pouch and throw it from her, hoping the dogs will pass it by; she also then finds flight easier for herself. A deserted baby kangaroo once fell to my care and I tried to rear it. It would not suck milk from a bottle till I held my apron folded to form a pouch, into which it coiled itself, its head outward between its two long legs. So placed it would suck and go to sleep—but it did not live long; Jock had been more robust.

We had some beautiful parrots and a native bear in the aviary, and a remarkable cockatoo. This bird lived on a metal stand behind the dining-room, where he listened for sounds he could imitate. His laugh was so

like my mother's that he often startled the household with his laugh when she was known to be many miles away. When my brother's tutor, Mr. MacIntyre, went out for an evening ride after a day's teaching, Cockie would go with him. He could not fly far or high as his wing feathers were kept short, so would go part of the way on Mr. MacIntyre's shoulder. When he saw the afternoon tea table laid he knew the time for the ride had come, and would dance up and down on his perch, calling, 'Going out, Mr. MacIntyre?' His chain was then unfastened, and he hopped out to the saddled horse to wait for the rider.

The kangaroo-dogs were dogs of chase, but they were also household pets up to the point at which petting would spoil hunting qualities. When resting after a long, hot run, they lay on the lower verandah or the gravel walk. One old dog was often one of a group settled in front of the dining-room fire late on chilly winter evenings. Stretched on the hearthrug, he had Jock at his back, the cat curled up against Jock's fur, while a large, green parrot perched drowsily on the back of a neighbouring armchair.

For a short time a white pig, Beauty, was also a pet, and ran freely about the station. She was in the habit, while very young and small, of escaping from the sty in the evening by a secret hole to run down to the fig-trees and eat the over-ripe fruit fallen to the ground. Her meal over, she returned dutifully to her sty; but one evening, on arriving at her hole, she was too distended to pass through, and hid in some quiet spot for the night. She liked the life outside the sty so well that she never went back. Till her fatal hour had come she was a popular station pet.

Of all this humanised animal world I think Cockie was the happiest. On his perch by the dining-room back-window he saw and heard all that went on, and would call on passing friends to give him a kiss or a lump of sugar.

He had learnt a few derisive phrases, which he would cry through the window, dancing up and down and raising his handsome yellow crest. When in a mischievous mood he would nip his friends sharply with his beak after summoning them with his ' Kiss pretty Cockie! '

On one warm Sunday as we sat in the hall, wise words from the preacher falling on our ear, we heard a persistent rustling on the verandah, and welcomed the sound as a herald breath of the cooling sea-breeze. But when, the service over, we went out on the verandah, there sat Cockie perched on a chair, his crest aloft, round him on the floor the tattered fragments of the Sunday magazines, which he had rent with his beak after releasing himself from his chain. It had been an hour of glorious freedom, unspoiled for him by the scolding which followed.

VIII

JOURNEYS AND CAMPING OUT

Our nearest town and the head of the railway was sixty miles distant; the road led over the 'Big Hill,'[1] a long, weary climb, and shadeless. It was impossible to make the journey in one day unless one sped along in a light buggy behind a fast-trotting horse, with a change on the way. My two elder brothers with my sister were at this time at school and college in England and Scotland, while we three younger children were at home. When my mother went to town she took us with her. We journeyed in a hooded phaeton, which held us all; leaving the station in the cool of the evening, about five o'clock, we made our first stage of fifteen miles, and halted for the night at Sandy Creek. This part of the drive was easy going over level country. When we arrived at the creek the horses were unharnessed by the bank, and hobbled to prevent them from straying. The coachman lighted a fire and set the water on the fire in a billy-can to boil, while we unpacked the eatables. The phaeton cushions were laid on the ground as pillows, and soon after our meal we were all on our backs wrapped in light rugs. After listening for a time to the sounds of the bush and the horses moving through the grass, and watching the fire burn low and the shadows cast by its light pale and pass away, we fell into happy slumber. Sometimes there was a moon, and its beams flickered through the light

[1] Originally 'Bigge's Hill' and named after Mr. Francis Bigge.

foliage of the gums on to their tall white stems. There were sweet scents of flowers as the dew fell, and pervading everywhere was the aroma of the gum leaves. The memory of these things lived on through many waking hours; people who have slept in the bush are haunted by it.

We made a very early start next day, and did not enjoy being roused at five o'clock to wash our faces in the creek and get ready for a hurried breakfast. The 'Big Hill' lay before us, and the phaeton creaked up the stony, dusty road as the weary horses climbed to their rest at the top and the coachman walked by their side; we children got out, too, sometimes, to ease them. It was a toilsome ascent, and I remember no more of the journey, for during the final stages I slept soundly; doubtless we were very cross after getting into the train. Sometimes we passed the night in a friend's house in Ipswich, and went on to the larger town next day.

The daily motor service to and from Brisbane still passes over the 'Big Hill,' but the crossing of it is now a joy. The forest has been thinned, and on either side the eye falls on a prospect as lovely as any on earth. Hills rise, one after the other, in long lines over a vast surface, folded in a blue soft and tender, yet glowing as if with an inner radiance, falling on one side to lower slopes which rise again to fantastic peaks before reaching the sea. A native legend ran that the peaks had been leading the sea on to submerge the land, but were stopped by a blow from a powerful giant; hence the crooked neck of the foremost peak.

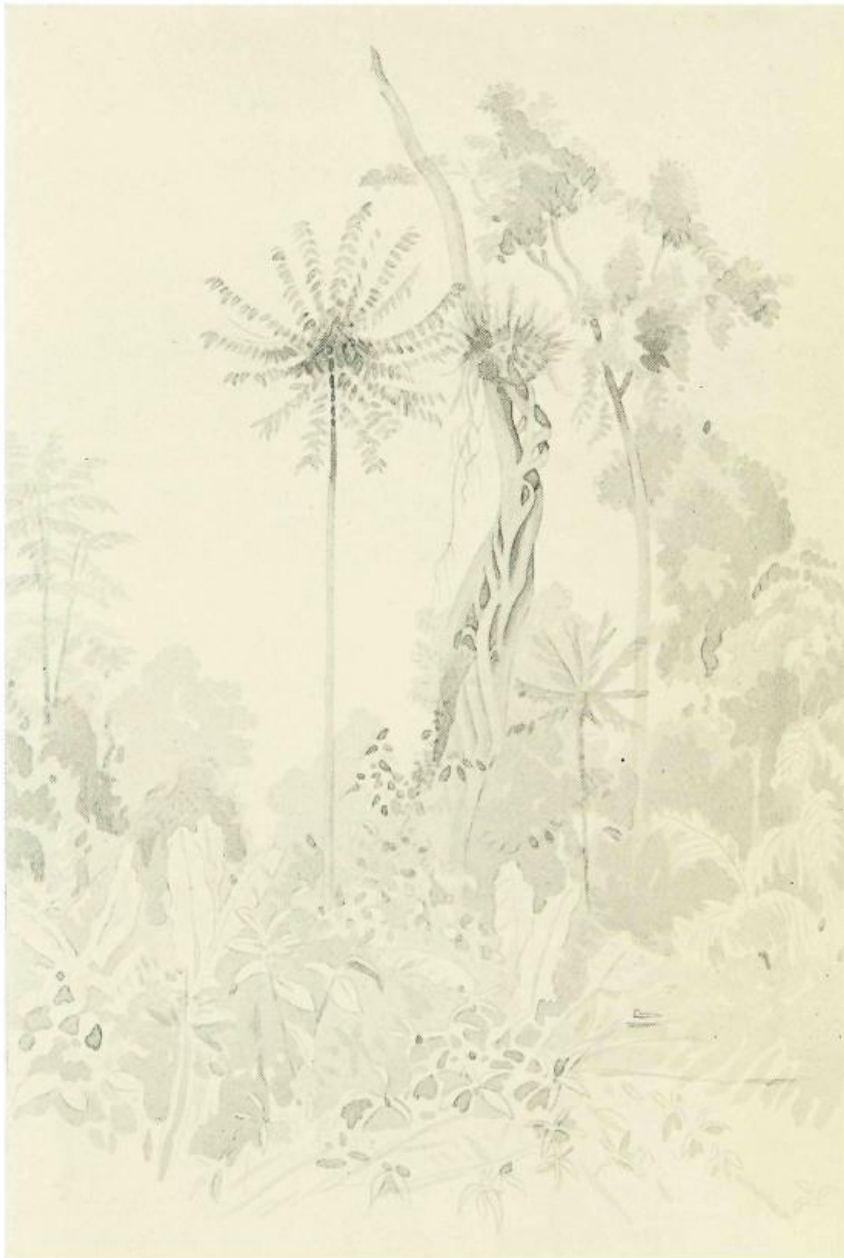
Tall forest gums still possess the surrounding country; unaffected by scorching drought as by heavy flood, aloof, impassive, they live heedless of man surely creeping to their doom; fall they must before the advancing ploughs.

Another route to town was by Gatton. My father drove me with him in his buggy when travelling by this

road; there was no camping out; we passed the night at a friend's house on the way, catching the train next day. We journeyed under trees differing from those nearer home, passed giant ant-hills standing two or three feet high, made of red clay, and saw black cockatoos with red crests, flying heavily. Of these journeys I remember only the incidents connected with the bush—the slow trains and the dusty, tin-roofed, commonplace towns have faded completely from my mind.

Camping out, after station life had become serious, was a means of entertaining visitors from overseas thirsting for new sensations. But while I was still a child there were campings to explore new paths and ascertain boundaries. We rode through dark scrubs guided by ' blazes ' chopped by a tomahawk on trees a year or two before, and halted to blaze other trees when we found a better track. The rich, earthy smell of the scrub was all about us; we took our horses carefully over trailing vines, looking for rare plants, orchids, and staghorns growing on the trees, or a scrub-turkey's nest. This was a mound, built up by the turkeys, of leaves in which the hens laid their eggs in community, leaving them to hatch out in the warmth and moisture of the decaying vegetable matter. We listened for the delicious notes of the bell bird, and the resounding crack of the coachwhip bird; the soothing gurgling of the swamp-pheasant we had heard nearer the river. None of these rare creatures ventured near the homestead: we made their acquaintance on our expeditions.

The K.C.B. tree, marked with these initials, stood on the summit of the range where three station properties met—Kilcoy, whose owner was Capt. the Honble. Louis Hope; Cressbrook, my father's home; and Mt. Brisbane, in the possession of Mr. Francis Bigge and his two brothers. Mr. William Butler, the genial manager of Kilcoy, and highly prized as our Father Christmas at the



A QUEENSLAND SCRUB SCENE

Sketch by Donald Thistlethwayte, Esq.

(*face p.* 55)

right season, sometimes met us at the K.C.B. tree to join our camp. While I yet rode only a pony I was a member of one or two of these early camping-out parties. We set off in the afternoon, leading a packhorse laden with tarpaulins, blankets, victuals and billy-cans for boiling tea, and rode up a steep spur to the higher ridges. After some exploration we found water and settled for the night. The gentlemen set up tents, lighted the fire, cut down branches for bedding and hobbled the horses; the ladies unpacked the provisions and made ready the meal. Our hunger appeased, we sat round the camp fire and told stories, sang glees and catches, and chatted; then more logs were piled on the fire, and the gentlemen retired to their tent in the background. The fire was stirred to flames before we separated as a beacon to the homesteads watching for our signal on the plains below.

We did not sleep much; there were strange sounds among the trees and inquisitive insects came to inspect us. One night rain began to fall while we were in our tent and held steadily on throughout the morning. Our horses slithered down the hill slopes on our way home, and when we reached the river we found it in flood and running fast. There was nothing to be done but to cross as quickly as possible, and we swam our horses over with much excitement.

In later years, when a camping-out was arranged as an experience for visitors, we no longer cared for it. The charm had gone, we talked by the fire to explain the bush and our spirits flagged. We sank thankfully into our comfortable beds the next night and, with head on a soft pillow, hoped that our next visitors would not want to camp out.

IX

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR

CHRISTMAS found us sweltering in summer heat. The sun shone from a cloudless sky, the air tingled with insect life, the surface of the earth split in gaping seams. From hour to hour we noted the degree Fahrenheit of the rising thermometer, a hundred degrees were not worthy of comment, but the quicksilver mounted steadily to 104 and 105 degrees in the shade. A daily record was kept and compared with records from neighbouring stations. About four o'clock the sea-breeze fanned us from the east, ensuring coolness for the night; how eagerly we looked for the first moving leaf heralding its approach! We sat on the verandah or lay on the grass after dinner to enjoy it. The air was dry and even tonic; free from malaria, its warmth brought no ill-health.

Yet in this hot season of midsummer we observed Christmas with the customs of the northern hemisphere, ate plumpudding and mincepies after our turkey and drank, though moderately, of champagne. A few early bunches of white sweet-water grapes were on the table, piled up on glass dishes and covered with their own beautiful leaves. Melons, with red flesh and glossy black seeds, were waiting for us on the verandah; they recalled us to our torrid surroundings. The blinds were drawn for shade, and green Venetian shutters shut out the glaring light from the rooms.

There had been a service in the hall decorated with

dark green sprays of chestnut. This fine tree bore no resemblance to either the horse or Spanish chestnut of Europe. Its leaves were smooth and glossy, and its parrot-like pulpy blossoms of scarlet and deep orange. It bore a large pod with handsome, brown beans; these had a sweetish flavour and were poisonous to cattle, so bringing about the destruction of the beautiful tree. In these earlier years it still flourished by the creek, and carts came up laden with the branches so suitable for decoration. We had greetings and good wishes painted in colours on white linen to put up; these were stored from season to season in the loft; we stitched on them borders of green leaves. In the evening there was a Christmas tree with gifts and spangles and a Father Christmas. The candles we had fixed to the tree in the early morning were now bending over with their heads pointing downwards as if the day had been very hot.

The 26th, Boxing Day, was a day of great events. The whole population of the station betook itself to the Middle Plain for a picnic and horse-races. Other stations joined us with competing horses and riders, and there was a busy hour drawing up the entries for the races. Women and children wore gay new print and muslin gowns, making pretty patches of colour on the grass, and shafts of sunlight fell through shading boughs above on to the white tents.

The Middle, or Racing Plain, had two neighbours, not quite so easy of access, a Big and a Little Plain, they were all three treeless. Of rich, alluvial soil, often coated by the silt of floods, they have been long under the ploughs of farmer settlers growing cream for butter factories and pigs for bacon, so converting British investment of enterprise and capital into food.

There was rising ground on two sides of the Racing Plain, making with the rivers boundaries for the races. Tents were put up after every imaginable kind of vehicle

had splashed its way through the creek and the horses had been unharnessed under the trees. Huge laundry baskets of ripe figs with water melons and peaches were supplied from the House garden, and there were kegs of ginger ale.

Loud cheers greeted the winning horses and the competition was keen. Occasionally a rider was unseated and thrown, and the horse bolted off to the rising ground. When all were intent on the racing, the children, being hot and thirsty, stole unobserved to the kegs of ginger ale, but the mastery of this magic drink was with the taps, which were in strict keeping and only inserted at intervals. The keeper of the taps was away with the racers and the children had recourse only to a keg with a drip; from this, however, they managed to catch ginger ale enough for solace, and were found in heavy slumber under the kegs.

The day ended with a dance in the schoolhouse. Most of the huts had guests for the day and night and there were many dancers. The younger children were in bed by this time; the throbbing of the accordion and the sound of time-beating feet on the floor were soon part of their dreams.

New Year's Eve had also its customs. There was a midnight service in the hall, abruptly ended as the clocks struck twelve. Squibs, fireworks, privileges bestowed by the mistletoe hanging over the doorways, and Scottish first footing brought in the New Year, as it had often before been brought in at 'home' over the seas. Next day work was resumed, and the heat grew stifling till storms of hail and rain broke over the parched earth. By February, usually, the wet season had set in with steady, soaking rain, and a still autumn prepared us for the enjoyment of winter.

X

RAINS, FLOODS AND THE WINTER

In southern Queensland the rains fall regularly in late January or February when the fates are kind; when there is a 'dry spell' or drought they fail, with dire results. The smaller water-courses run dry, their beds merely sand and stones, and the river pools are almost stagnant, covered with weeds on which water spiders jump, scuttling after midges. My childhood fell in a period of good seasons, and during the ensuing droughts I was mostly in Europe. The rain would fall steadily for days and weeks on end; I once knew it fall during the whole of February. It would cease for a morning, and we set out with goloshes and baskets under sullen, shrouded skies to gather mushrooms. The days were tedious at this time, but it was always good to fall asleep at night with the sound of the rain beating on the roof in our ears. It is a joy known only to those who have lived through weeks of burning heat, the hearing of heavy rain at night, pouring, steady rain. One drowsed in harmony with elemental, primeval life, temporary things were swallowed up in the downpour. In Europe we craved for the sound, and on returning to Australia welcomed it as reviving memories of enchanted childhood.

Then at last came the flood, the river roaring in the early morning with a threatening sound of rushing water. It rose about my father's home till the flats and the lower garden were covered, and trees and logs floated past like

straws. Then it rose again and swirled on to the lower verandah and through the rooms in the older part of the house. But at this point the waters found an outlet lower down, and escaped without rising further. Fences were carried away, and cattle too, if they had not been driven to higher ground in time. The kookaburras laughed on the bunya tree thinking of the good worms they would find in the moist soil. Drowned things they looked at askance—the kookaburra kills his prey himself.

Then the rain ceased, the sun shone on the grey water, and the river withdrew to its legitimate bed; after such a rising, however, it was always ready to rise very quickly again. What a scene of devastation it left behind it! Mud covered the lower garden and the fields, ugly drift-wood lay caught on fences and in the forked branches of the trees, and unsightly holes disfigured the banks. The rushing water washed away the river-bed, and the crossings, safe before, could be used no longer. Riders and drivers passed slowly across, testing the depth as they went, and often plunged into deep holes unawares. Reports of changes were brought in by travellers almost daily, and were carefully noted: men rode out to see if there had been loss of human life or serious accident. It was some days before the usual routine was restored.

After the floods cold weather began. Late autumn and early winter were calm and windless, the brilliance of the sun was now a thing to rejoice at, not to shrink from, and drenching dews lay sparkling on the grass and shimmering on the trees till ten or eleven o'clock. In the evening small floating clouds dimpled the hills and turned pink, golden, tawny and ruby red at sunset. Coleus, amaranths and all summer annuals were dug out of the garden borders, wilted under the night frosts. In June and July the frosts were severe, water was found frozen in the buckets and the pumps were held fast by ice till long after sunrise; the air was keen and invigorating, the

radiant mornings left us like giants refreshed. The 'westerly' was the only foe, a wind blowing hard and sharp and dry from the inland plains. It blew all day, and kept on usually for three days, falling away at night. Occasionally it would set in again immediately for another three days; we watched the leaves of trees from our windows at dawn on the fourth day, dreading to see them move, for we knew this a sign that another three days of withering wind had begun. There was no escape from it, it turned every corner; the wooden houses shrank while it dried the wood and found its way in by unsuspected cracks and chinks. The horses and cattle stood with their backs to it, looking miserable; we walked out to warm ourselves, thankful that it would desist from its annoying ways at nightfall. It left the native grasses stubble, and as soon as the westerlies ceased burning off began, a process carefully timed by growers of stock. The dead grass-stalks fed the flames as they consumed the sapless overgrowth, leaving the roots to send up fresh shoots when the spring showers fell. Sometimes the wind sprang up late again and the fires became a danger, rising in raging flames high in the air. Men went out with sacks and buckets of water to put them out, sometimes the women helped, carrying the buckets with water from the river or a creek near at hand. A belt of grass half-a-mile wide was burnt ahead of the flames round the head station, for they travelled with startling rapidity, and might easily burn the barns and all the wooden houses to cinders in one short hour. The beaters were sometimes out all night fighting the flames. From the verandahs we saw them blaze, and where the trees had been ring-barked and were dead they caught fire and stood like burning columns through the dark night. The earth was black and charred for a little time afterwards, but the amazing native power of growth soon reasserted itself; new grass grew fresh and green for the hungry cattle, and

managers took stock of their herds for the busy summer work.

After abundant rain tiny streams rippled down from the hills during the winter, to cease with the first hot days, when the water-rats, greatly sorrowing, deserted their pleasant holes by a bunch of rushes for summer quarters elsewhere. But everywhere the undersoil retained its moisture, maidenhair ferns were to be found all the year round on the banks of water courses, with bracken spreading its vigorous fronds further back among the long grasses. I remember myself as a child constantly walking through long grass, gathering flowers, buttercups, small daisies, tiny harebells, and orchis or ferns. In the settled country now, however, many of these native grasses have been eaten out where land taxes forbid any inch of land to be left unoccupied, or where the farmer's plough diligently turns over the soil. Such changes are inevitable; after the pioneer comes development, yet one cannot always stifle one's regret at the passing of 'the bush.'

XI

TEACHERS, LOGS AND FANCIES

In Australian country houses children live with older people more than they do in colder climates; they have their nursery hours and meals, but when not at lessons they move about the house or gardens and find friends to talk to. Often such friends, if on a long visit, will read with a child for an hour or two in the morning, and there are thus many educational influences interwoven with his early life. We were not without books—one, Mrs. Barbauld's *Hymns in Prose*, I remember reading on the verandah; others were *Dawn of Day* and the tales of Maria Edgeworth. I discovered *Marmion* early, and climbed on to the roof of a shed among sweet-scented budleagh blossoms to read it, bees at work all round and butterflies spreading their bright wings to the sun.

An older brother and sister left home for education while the younger children were still in the nursery, but for a year before they left we had a governess in common. The older pupils were too active for her; she could not keep them in order, and they would compel me to take a part in their schemes. One day when they were in hiding above the ceiling, a retreat inaccessible to so young a child as myself, they were afraid I should reveal the secret if left at large in the schoolroom, and bolted me into a small wooden cupboard, under strictest orders to answer no appeals. As the culprits were within hearing I dared make no sound, though my heart smote me when our

governess, Mrs. Mitchell, called aloud on me to reveal my whereabouts. I was compelled to remain silent in the cupboard till released by my brother and sister. Mrs. Mitchell and I were on friendly terms, I found her interesting and kind, she lent me delightful little books and was a patient teacher. Her older pupils would come across her in her free time on a hot afternoon asleep on a lounge chair with a handkerchief over her face, which for some inscrutable reason excited their sense of the ridiculous, and she could not ride, so they looked on her as a person on whom they might practise pranks during the absence of my parents.

On another afternoon the hiding was in the corn-cob barn, a neat little building with a sloping, shingled roof; it stood lifted five feet above the ground on four stout posts, and kept the corn dry and free from mice. My brother led my sister and me up among the cobs by a small ladder, drawn up after us, and we crouched, hidden from view, among the maize still in its husks. Mrs. Mitchell had no doubt heard from one of the servants which direction we had been seen to take, and passed through the fowlyard to look for us among the barns. Again I was commanded to remain silent under threats of pinching, while she called us each by name. We could see her between the boards of the floor; but naughtiness prevailed, and the hour for lessons had gone by before we emerged. I think Mrs. Mitchell was too kind and too understanding to let my parents know of these doings on their return, or at least I did not share in any punishment. Possibly the framers of the plots explained my innocence.

After these older children left we were taught by an English lady, who was with us only a short time, till her marriage with the manager of an adjoining station. My oldest brother's tutor lived at the Cottage, Mr. MacIntyre, and there were other tutors for my younger brothers later,

after we had been living two or three years in Edinburgh and had returned to Australia for a time.

After school hours we sometimes played games by the river. My brother armed us with long sticks as weapons, which we handled as imaginary spears, charging down the bank at his command. We had to disregard nettles as good soldiers and betray no fear of pain. But our best-loved playground was the huge, white trunk of a fallen tree, which lay on a bank about half-way to the river and out of sight of the House. Logs are a source of great delight to bush children. Once when an Australian child had been taken to play games in a beautiful English park, she was asked how she liked it, and replied, 'It is very nice, but where are all the logs?' and there was disappointment in her tone. Rare little flowering plants and ferns grow in the shelter of a fallen log, and when its bark is stripped off strange insects are exposed to view, and scamper away in hurried alarm. Under the log there are still more wonderful creatures, and lizards run in and out of the cracks. Logs lying half out of the water are good to dive from or cling on to while venturing near a deep pool or trying to catch shrimps and eels. We always knew when a tree had fallen across the river, and used it as a bridge till the next flood carried it away. It did not always reach the whole way across, and there was a brave jump to be made at the other side, while the twisted roots gave chances for adventure at the start. We loved, too, to jump logs when out on horseback, in spite of the falls this form of sport often occasioned. Logs were glorious, but none were so interesting as the prostrate giant in front of the House. Its trunk was broad, and where it forked one arm sloped slightly upwards, ending in a long point. Our leaders told us that if we would walk barefoot to this point and stand there in silence, we should hear fairies talking and understand what they said. My brother would stand there barefoot

and look as if he were listening intently to fairy talk, while we watched from below. He explained that he was not permitted to repeat the wonderful things the fairies said. We then tried to walk ourselves along this bewitched branch, but fell off, and were scolded for disturbing the fairies. We called the log 'the fairy log,' and wreathed it with garlands of flowers on our birthdays and at Christmas.

Some time after the inventors of this romance had gone away, we crept down alone to the log and, to the unbounded admiration of my younger brothers, I succeeded at last in standing barefooted and in silence at the end of the pointed limb; but there were no fairy voices, and a chill of disillusionment sent us sadly home. Not long after a big flood swept the log away, and it was with a sense of desolation we visited the spot where it had lain so long.

We chased the nimble little lizards and played with frogs in buckets of water. During one of these games a frog was killed and we were struck with remorse. We decided to give it a ceremonial burial in the lower garden, where we had a flower border of our own; a tin matchbox was the coffin, filled with rose petals and covered with a large vine leaf. This we carried on a board, and processed with measured steps down the long vine walk and on to our flower-border, gravely digging a hole in which to bury the frog.

Children, as is well known, have an intimate understanding with the animal world, and even with reptiles. At the age of five I was found sitting on the ground by the verandah steps, poking my finger into a small round hole, then withdrawing it and waiting for a head to appear. The head was the head of a venomous black snake; yet I had suffered no harm, and cried when I was taken away.

XII

PESTS

THE pests of Australia are notorious, but during the winter months most of them disappear; the summer, however, finds them vigorous. Yet I do not remember suffering greatly from them in my childhood.

The smallest has not the least power to annoy, and the small ant has great powers of annoyance. More than one kind of ant practises his proverbial industry to the detriment of domestic comfort and is an unwelcome house-mate. The lively ants, bull-dogs and others, with which one has a nodding acquaintance out of doors, are in their own domain, and human beings who elect to sit down on the grass by their nests must be prepared for sharp nips from their jaws. The white ant is a destroyer of houses, and lining boards and wooden ceilings are often rotten before his presence has been detected. He works along a passage which he covers with mud, and the trail of dried mud along an outer wall fortunately betrays his presence before much harm has been done; very often, however, this covered way is built up from underneath the house and is not soon found. This ant is most persistent and works with great rapidity. Wooden houses are built on stout wooden piles covered at the top with inverted metal plates, lying under the sleepers which they support; the ant cannot climb over this plate and retires baffled.

Flying ants fly into the rooms when lamps attract them at night, and leave their wings in the soft butter or the sauce. Moths and other enterprising winged insects fly in to the lights in the same way, and beetles astonish one by booming in and running over the dining table. Gauze or net, made fast to wooden frames fitting the windows, keeps them out; but on very hot nights, when every breath of air is welcome, there are various openings through which they find their way; in many houses the verandahs are entirely fitted with protecting nets.

The small common black ant is a cheery being of immense ingenuity; he is aware within a quarter of an hour of any tempting food left within his reach, and arrives in hundreds to consume and carry away. To cope with this ant, table legs are set standing in deep saucers of water which he cannot cross.

There is another minute red ant sometimes found in food: he is very insidious, but is not seen in all districts.

Flies are legion, and maintain in Australia the reputation gained elsewhere for persistent worrying. Nets and gauze keep them out of the rooms and larder, and if the house is kept darkened they stay outside. Large wire covers are placed over dishes to protect them from an ugly fly, which leaves its unsightly young crawling over either cooked or uncooked meat; it performs its progenital duties with astonishing speed, and dishes cannot be left uncovered for a moment if it is near.

Mosquitoes are perhaps the most trying of all pests, but they can be kept at a distance by the fumes of burning substances they are known to detest. During the winter they are not seen. Their astuteness in getting under mosquito nets would be worthy of praise if practised in a better cause. The death of a mosquito is sheer delight, but is not easy to bring about, for his celerity in avoiding vicious slaps is amazing. He is not malarial, there are

no malarial germs for him to carry: in so far he practises an innocent irritation.

Frogs like to live indoors, where they catch flies and are comparatively safe from snakes. They hide behind pictures, and jump down to the floor with a loud squawk when disturbed or when rain falls; they are attached to their homes, and will travel long distances to return if taken away. Tarantulas also enter houses to look for flies; as a child I abhorred their long legs and ugly, dark body, but they are infrequent visitors. Lizards chase moths across the ceiling at night, and jump after them with sudden energy after seeming to lie inert and unobservant till the moth's suspicions are at rest.

Cockroaches are said to have been introduced from Jamaica, but I knew and disliked them as a child after our return from Edinburgh: these were not with us during the earlier years. They and the small silver-fish nibble the bindings of books, which are sadly disfigured by them unless treated by some preventive.

Hopping fleas are too well known to call for comment, but I must record them as an experience of childhood.

This is a formidable list of indoor pests, but means of combating them are always to be found, and hardly any exist during the winter. In mediaeval Europe men were tormented by pests far more generally than to-day; life gradually frees itself, even in hot climates, from the active, intelligent creatures described as nuisances, and we may hope many will retreat in time to untenanted places.

The snake was a danger chiefly during the pairing season, and would usually rather escape unnoticed than attack; if he came into a house, chasing flies or frogs, he was very dangerous, as he would turn on anyone cutting off his retreat. The snake, as also the lizard and the frog, has an ear for music. In one home I knew a large lizard was seen to draw near during the Sunday services and

listen to the singing, his head lifted high above the post on which he stood. The violinist Joachim declared that frogs preferred good music to bad, and never failed to sit listening on the window-sill during the playing of a Beethoven quartette or a violin solo by Bach. I have seen a snake glide into a room with its head raised and its eyes on the piano on which a friend was playing—I do not remember whether the music which charmed him was classical or not.

If a snake was killed and its skin brought to the house and stretched on a board, it was not safe to bring it indoors, for its mate would come in search of it and lie coiled in a box close by to spring on anyone who lifted the lid. Handsome carpet snakes, not venomous, would visit the hens' nests and swallow one or two eggs; the frightened fowls announced their presence if they saw them by cries of alarm, when the snake would be killed by someone with a rake or a hoe or a gun. This snake would swallow bandicoots or other small animals whole, and sleep for days coiled up with the still undigested meal plainly visible as a lump in his body.

The flying fox carried on pillage in the orchard at night, and was a greedy eater of fruit. A bat-like being, he had a strong, acrid smell, and hung by small hooks on his wings to the branches of the fruit trees; often six or seven would hang together in a cluster till disturbed by a shot from a gun.

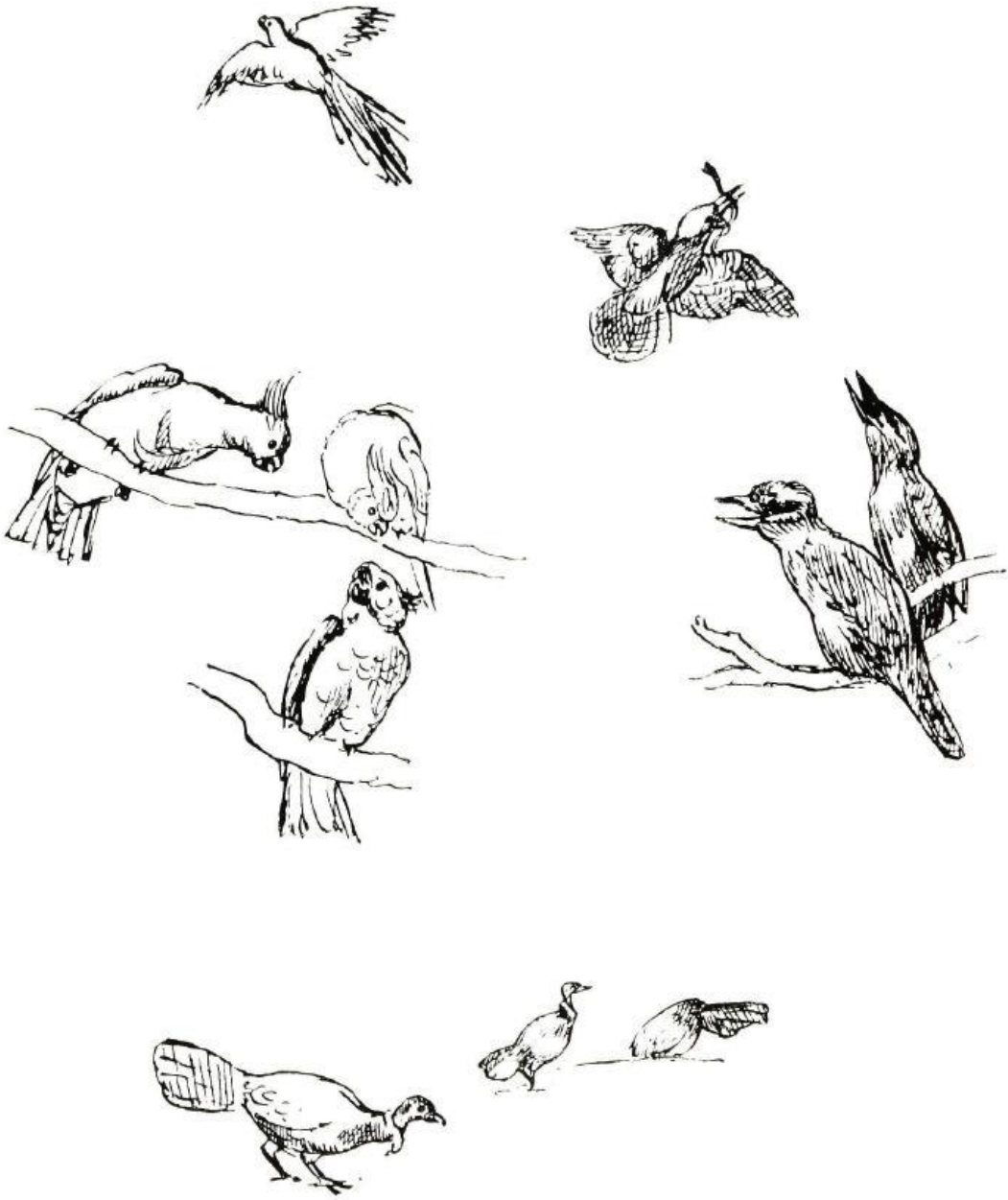
Outdoor pests were the torment of the pastoralist. At certain seasons armies of grasshoppers, locusts or small caterpillars would pass over the land in belts a mile or more in width, leaving not a blade of grass behind; but these raiding armies can no longer make headway in the settled districts. More troublesome, because more constant, pests are better known, the cattle tick, the rabbit and a cactus, the prickly pear; all three imported from other lands where the foes provided by nature kept them

successfully in check. They were unheard of in the days of my childhood, and those were halcyon times for stock owners. The burden of the rabbit is felt in the form of a tax for the provision of a fund to maintain the rabbit-proof fence between Queensland and New South Wales, constantly inspected and kept in perfect repair; for the invasion of Queensland by rabbits would bring ruin to many. These troubles and the means taken to overcome them, however, belong to later history; but one other pest should be mentioned, the fly injurious to the fleece of the sheep: it was a trouble of the early days.

The sundowner was a human pest; he tramped through the bush humping his ' bluey,' a dark blue blanket, and a billy-can, to arrive at a station at nightfall and beg a night's food and shelter. It was dangerous to refuse this, for the sundowner was often vindictive, and would set fire to grass or leave gates and slip-rails open in revenge as he went on his way. It is said that only when his boots are worn out does he look for work, and when he has earned the wherewithal to buy a stout pair he takes to the road again. His old felt hat and shabby garments go on without change for years, but his circuit is so wide that they are not often seen twice in the same district.

The friend or relative who looked to the Australian bush for a means of the livelihood he had failed to earn in Europe was also, one regrets to say, of the nature of a pest. He was often unfitted for the strenuous life, and was without resource or adaptability. The frequent falls from his horse and his habit of getting lost, when men had to go in search of him, tried the patience of busy people, and these unprofitable adventures depressed him with a sense of his uselessness. It was heart-breaking to come so far to find himself unsuited to an out-of-door career which left him unfitted for other work. Men who came with a vocation rapidly made their way, and their zest and sense of fun made them pleasant companions,

while their pluck in mounting a half-broken, bucking horse in the full view of expert and rather hardened riders, won respect and liking. Others had sometimes the courage to break away from a mistaken course in time and fit themselves for an occupation in a town; but the man who stayed on and drifted from one station to another, or sought solace in intemperance, became a distressing element in the growing life of a young country.



COCKATOOS, LAUGHING JACKASSES AND SCRUB TURKEYS

From the sketch-book of Donald Thistlethwayte, Esq.

(*face p.* 73)

XIII

BIRDS

THE birds abiding most vividly in my childhood memories are the magpie-lark or peewee and the Willy wagtail; they were always about the garden, animated and vivacious, full of curiosity about our doings, yet never known as pets. These two birds are both pied black and white, as are noticeably many Australian feathered beings, and are neither of them songsters. The Willy wagtail has a cheerful twitter, seeming to say 'pretty little creature,' which he repeats constantly during the day and on bright moonlight nights; my memories of moonlight about the old home are all linked with this bird's busy chattering note. He would hop brightly from twig to twig, looking sideways on anyone coming near, his fan-tail raised and whisking back and forwards. His favourite haunt was the bunya tree, the long bare branches, carrying their tufts of prickly leaves only at the furthermost tip, gave him excellent opportunities for watching what went on close by, and he was not easily frightened.

The magpie-lark is a frequenter of gardens in every part of Australia, a very pugnacious, bold little bird, with a strident cry and an air of general wide-awakeness. He is often seen driving away birds larger than himself with his sharp beak, and gladly joins other birds in an attempt to frighten a common enemy. One afternoon we heard a chorus of shrieks and loud cries from a tree adjoining a leafy loquat: the loquats were temptingly ripe and yellow,

and had attracted a party of green parakeets, special lovers of this fruit. But the birds were not on the loquat tree, and were led in their loud calls by the magpie-larks, never seen on trees, but always running along the ground. One or two birds of another kind had joined the chorus, and the cries increased in vehemence, till one of us crossed the lawn to ascertain the cause, and found a huge cat, not in the least intimidated, crouched on a bough of the loquat tree. Peering from between the dark green leaves, he quietly watched the excited birds, some of which he hoped in good time to enjoy; but finding himself observed, he made off and the birds left off shrieking. This fighting action of the magpie-lark was noteworthy, for at other times he had no dealings with his fellow-birds, but kept them at a respectful distance.

The magpie, a shrike thrush by classification, is, like the butcher bird, also pied black and white; these are the sweetest singers of Queensland, where the lyre-bird, a denizen of South Australia, is very rarely heard. The butcher bird is easily tamed; he will sit on a verandah rail by the tea table, and wait till someone tosses one or two bits of bread in the air for him to snap up and carry off on the wing. But he prefers mice and lizards to bread, and will hide any he catches and kills in a gutter or the corner of a roof till he is ready for a meal. He has a lovely song, and sits for an hour at a time trying over his notes and experimenting with new ones, or imitating those of other birds, in full, rich tones. He sings with his beak shut, and will patiently correct the singing of a younger bird. Both he and the magpie, whose range is more limited, sing all the year round, on early dewy mornings in summer as in the sparkling brilliance of mid-day sunshine in winter. Critics of bird-song judge them wanting in fire and intensity, qualities which may be claimed by the small reed-warbler; but the sweetness, roundness and variety of the butcher bird's notes are

entrancing, and in perfect accord with the character of their own world, where the seasons pass without great sign of change, or passionate outpouring of welcome.

The call of the boobook owl, known as the mopork, is soft and alluring, floating on the air under the starlight with a cadence in a minor key. The curlew, too, is heard at night, a shy bird which crouches on the ground to hide, or stands on the dry branch of a fallen tree with its neck stretched out, its head in the same straight line, and its eyes closed, to resemble as nearly as possible the branch on which it stands. If we detected the bird in this position, we would steal as near to it as possible to see if it would move.

The bell-bird and the coachwhip-bird are heard in the shady scrub; neither bird will venture near homesteads; we listened for their notes riding along a blazed path through the tangle among the trees.

The kookaburra or laughing jackass has won world-wide fame; he is commonly heard in full chorus with others of his kind in the early morning or during rain. Children delight in his laugh. Ornithologists say he is a stupid and a lazy bird, but he thrives and laughs on.

White cockatoos, attracted in large numbers by the ripening maize, were a great interest to us; we liked to hear the noise they made in tearing the dry husks from the pods; but there was usually someone on watch with a gun to frighten them away. The black cockatoo, a large, heavy bird with a handsome red crest, we believed to be a portent of heavy rains and flood; we associated him with dark days, and had a secret fear of him. Parrots and parakeets, lories and rosellas we knew well; their gay wings flashing among eucalyptus leaves when the tree was in bloom were things worth looking out for; sometimes they came about the gardens, but only when fruit was to be had.

The black swan is well known in Queensland, but we

did not see him on the Brisbane river; during visits to Brisbane we found him in state in the beautiful botanical gardens.

The scrub turkey, a mound bird, was prized as game; the large mound in which the eggs were hatched out was never molested, for we knew that many turkey chicks would appear when the time of incubation was over. Black duck, wild duck and several kinds of pigeon we saw in their native haunts, as well as on the table when shooting parties had brought them in as game. The pigeons were quite unafraid of man without a gun at that time; sitting among maiden-hair fern on the bank of a creek shaded by bean trees, I have known them hop over my feet and carry on their bird businesses undisturbed close by. We knew the emu well, and there was an attempt to keep one tamed about the homestead, but he was never very popular and was distinguished by an inordinate love of peaches.

If the dwelling-house lies near a river or a patch of scrub, birds are heard all day long, not always in song, but pecking or snapping or twittering; one is conscious of a busy, happy life of bright-eyed creatures always near.

It is to the swamp pheasant one's thoughts most often recur when remembering the still, hot days of summer; his delicious notes gurgled from near a river or large creek, the last repeated on the same tone like an echo. Always dreamy and remote, their peculiar elusive quality accorded well with the shy nature of the bird. In the quiet air, the gumtrees standing stark above the darker river trees in which he hid, his notes brought a sense of wide horizons and of a world undefined and unlimited. Of all Australian bird-songs his expresses most truly the subtle charm of the bush.

BOTTLE TREES, NEAR PROSTON, QUEENSLAND

(*face p. 77*)

XIV

TREES AND FLOWERS

It is true that the jubilant outburst of young life at the coming of spring in Europe is unknown in Australia. Two or three trees there are that shed their leaves in winter, but among so many to keep in leaf all the year round those of another habit are barely noticeable. Dwellers in the bush, however, whose eyes know only the soft grey green of the native trees, are aware of new spring tints which would be passed unobserved by those accustomed to the glow of seasonal change elsewhere. There are no banners of colour, no sudden flames of growth to announce the coming of the hot summer, but there is a delicate, fugitive bronze at the tips of the darker branches, and here and there a soft green tassel or a pale, lacey tracery of young leaf, as on the white branches of the cedar. The pale bronze is very lovely against the blue of the hills or the lilac of the cedar blossoms, or even against the darker grey of older foliage; it outlines the tree like a fragile wreath, with an occasional feathery spray of a warmer tint. At the time it is seen, smoke from the 'burning off' still lingers on the ground and rises in misty vapours among the branches. The effect is of dreamy waiting, rather than of eager expectancy.

The bottlebrush tree puts out its crimson brush at this time, hanging down with sprays of pale young green to the river below, and the honeysuckle tree, a native Banksia, has dense, cylindrical, honey-coloured spikes amongst its silver-lined foliage.

The grevillea produces an uncommon flower of dark bronze, mixed with gold, full of honey and beloved by bees. Its anthers remained with tips curved to their base, in a loop, till a warm hour released them; we would watch for the moment when the loop straightened out, delighted to catch the sudden spring of the released anther.

Many varieties of eucalyptus bear flowers, but the red-flowering tree is a stranger to Queensland. The long-leafed wattle grew in our district and filled the air with the scent of its slender spikes; we had also the ball variety. The rich crimson and orange blossom of the bean tree, or chestnut, as it was known locally, grew amongst glossy dark green leaves, a perfect setting for the handsome flower, and there were shrubs along the borders of the scrub with pure white blossoms of a delicious scent. Few of these flowers had petals of any size, and as we had roses, hibiscus, dahlias, petunias and other gay flowers in the garden, we preferred them as children to the flowers of the native trees.

The bunya bears large cones with nuts, which are good eating when roasted. The nuts come in special profusion every third year; at this hour of plenty the blacks held their bunya feast, a tribe having its own right to the fruit of certain trees. The large cones, the size of a man's head, fell without warning from the giant bunya near the house, and we were kept out of the range of their fall when they were ripe. Now and again someone was sent to climb the prickly tree and bring down the cones as they ripened to prevent accidents; a cone falling on one's head or shoulders was not a pleasant experience. In autumn the tree sheds many of the long sprays of prickles growing at the end of the branch; they are now sere and brown, and fall so plentifully that they have to be cleared away from the flower-borders near the tree every morning. Fresh tufts of prickles grow again on the outermost tips while the older growth had been discarded from within,

so that the tufts grow ever farther and farther from the stem; they spread outwards, as if with a frantic desire to escape.

The she-oak, growing on gravelly river beds, has needles like a pine, but long enough to sigh as they move under a breeze with a sound of indescribable sadness and yearning. As we lay in the shade by a river after an outdoor meal on a hot day, the strange music of the she-oak brought fancies of disturbed ghosts to our dreams. To travellers lost in the bush, or to lonely wanderers oppressed with trouble of any kind, the sighing of the she-oak must be almost unbearable; it brings a sense of loneliness, as of one lost in limitless aeons of time whom nothing earthly could recall. As a child the sound pleased and soothed me after some hours of bustling activity, it exercised a charm akin to that of *Marmion* among the budleagh blossoms, or a fairy tale read on the bough of a shady fig-tree; it is as a memory of childhood I allude to it here.

Gum trees passed through a phase of ghostliness by the will of man. They were ring-barked, that is, a ring of bark about a foot and a half in depth was cut round the trunk two or three feet from the root, whereupon the tree died, and was left standing stark and lifeless till it fell or was burnt to the ground.

> The stark white ring-barked forests,
> All tragic to the moon

as an Australian poetess describes them, with her inborn love of strange, sere things. 'Tragic to the moon' they indeed were, as the white moonlight shone on their tall bare trunks and leafless branches stripped of the slighter twigs, stretched up to the sky as if frozen in an attitude of appeal. After bush fires they blazed on through the night, while the frailer branches fell in a shower of sparks. Afterwards they stood charred and blackened for a time,

till they crumbled and fell, leaving open spaces for views of the hills and a more vigorous growth of grass where their roots no longer absorbed moisture from the soil.

The ground flowers round our home were of the delicate fragile character peculiar to bush flowers of south-east Queensland; we looked for them among the tall grasses and at the roots of trees. The ground was never covered with an exuberant growth of blossoms as in Europe; they grew with a quiet grace, and many had a sweet aromatic scent. 'A starveling in a scanty dress' one might say of the bush flower; but as we made discoveries of unknown varieties from time to time, we looked on them as peculiarly our own and loved them.

To-day farms occupy the land of which I have been speaking, cultivated fields lie beside the river banks, and Rhodes grass covers the lower slopes and runs up among the spurs of the hills, giving variety and beautiful shades of colour. But the shy wild flowers have retreated, and children of to-day must go farther afield to find them in the settled districts. Butter factories and the platforms where the milk is collected for creameries or tinning keep men, and children too, very busy 'bringing, bringing, bringing in the cows,' and the days are marked by a monotony unknown to the pioneer's life of romance and discovery. Close settlement means intense and unceasing industry with very little variety, though it is more and more relieved by reasonable recreation and the friendly intercourse fostered by associations of truly and deeply patriotic women. By these means disastrous urbanisation may be checked. And there is still place for fancy and love of nature in the minds of bush children. They walk or ride along woodland ways each day to the country schools, look out at night on a starry sky, and have all about their doors the quiet mysterious bush.